



War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress

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Summary

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States launched and led military operations in Afghanistan in order to end the ability of the Taliban regime to provide safe haven to al Qaeda and to put a stop to al Qaeda's use of the territory of Afghanistan as a base of operations for terrorist activities. Many observers argue that in succeeding years, as U.S. and world attention shifted sharply to the war in Iraq, the Afghan war became the "other war" and suffered from neglect. The Obama Administration, however, has made the war in Afghanistan a higher priority, by giving it early attention, regularly conducting strategy reviews, and making significant additional commitments of civilian and military resources. By early 2011, senior leaders, including the Commander of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), General David Petraeus, were pointing to discrete progress on the ground, though noting that such progress was still "fragile and reversible."

In late 2010, NATO and the Afghan government agreed to pursue a key medium-term goal: the transition of lead responsibility for security to Afghans throughout the country by the end of 2014. The U.S. government has stated its intention to begin drawing down some U.S. forces from Afghanistan in July 2011, and also to maintain a long-term strategic partnership with Afghanistan beyond 2014.

Strategic vision for Afghanistan is still, many would argue, a work in progress. President Karzai has consistently stressed the theme of "Afghan leadership, Afghan ownership." President Obama has consistently stressed the core goals of the United States: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent their return. Yet for the U.S. government, fundamental issues remain unresolved. These include

- determining the minimum essential conditions required for Afghanistan itself to be able to sustain stability with relatively limited international support;
- defining the appropriate combination of U.S. efforts, together with other international resources, over time, required to achieve those minimum conditions; and
- balancing U.S. national security interests in Afghanistan and the region against other imperatives, in a constrained fiscal environment.

This report, which will be updated as events warrant, describes and analyzes

- the key players in the war in Afghanistan;
- the strategic outlooks of the Afghan government, the U.S. government, and NATO;
- the threats to the security and stability of the Afghan state and its people;
- the major facets of the current effort: security, governance and anti-corruption, development, reconciliation and reintegration, and transition;
- mechanisms in place to measure progress; and
- critical issues that Congress may wish to consider further.

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Overview

The war in Afghanistan began with a U.S.-led military response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, designed to remove the Taliban-led regime and prevent future terrorist safe havens. The war, currently in its 10th year, is now a multi-faceted joint, civil-military, combined campaign, including a NATO-led military effort and substantial multi-lateral and bilateral civilian initiatives, broadly aimed at ending the insurgent threat to the Afghan government and helping the Afghan people lay the foundations for lasting stability.

Major Stakeholders

For the government of Afghanistan, the war is first of all an existential struggle for survival against the Taliban and other insurgents, as well as a longer-term effort to establish sustainable security and stability.

For the Afghan people, the war is only the latest proximate cause of instability and insecurity in 30 years of conflict and dislocation. Their daily lives are shaped by the hardships of providing for their families in settings with very limited economic development and opportunity, intimidation in some areas from insurgent groups, and frustration with the limited capacity and, sometimes, corruption of official government structures.

For the major insurgent groups, the war is about achieving some combination of political power, economic leverage, and radical Islamic cultural influence.

For the U.S. government—which leads the international military effort, provides substantial civilian expertise, and plays a significant role in shaping the overall strategic direction—the war in Afghanistan concerns helping ensure the security of both Afghanistan and the region, including denying safe haven to terrorists, in order to establish a stable regional security balance and protect U.S. national interests.

For regional states, including India and Russia as well as Afghanistan's immediate neighbors Pakistan and Iran, the war is critical because it may have a powerful impact on both security and the balance of power and influence in the region. Pakistan in particular, which willingly or otherwise provides safe haven to Afghan insurgent groups, has deeply vested interests in the outcome of the conflict.

For individual member states of the NATO Alliance, the war may be about some combination of defeating terrorist networks, ensuring regional stability, proving themselves as contributing NATO members, and demonstrating the relevance of the Alliance to 21st century global security challenges.

Current Dynamics

Under the Obama Administration, the war in Afghanistan—after years of being perceived by many as “the other war”—has become the focus of significantly greater leadership time and attention, and the recipient of significantly greater resources. The U.S. government's core goals

for the war have remained unchanged since March 2009: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent their return.¹ In December 2009, following a comprehensive strategic review, President Obama announced two decisions: to “surge” both military and civilian personnel to Afghanistan, and to begin withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan, on a “conditions-based” basis, in July 2011.²

In November 2010, at the NATO Lisbon Summit, the governments of the United States, the other NATO Allies, and Afghanistan expressed support for the full transition of lead responsibility for security to Afghans by the end of 2014. Allies also reaffirmed their “long-term commitment to a better future for the Afghan people.”³ In December 2010, announcing the results of the Administration’s Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review, President Obama confirmed U.S. commitment to both transition by 2014 and a long-term U.S.-Afghan strategic partnership.⁴

In early 2011, General David Petraeus, Commander of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, in a letter to the ISAF troops, credited the hard work of the force, together with its Afghan partners, for “halting a downward security spiral in much of the country and to reversing it in some areas of great importance.”⁵ In his December 2010 speech, President Obama recognized “considerable gains toward our military objectives,” but acknowledged that they were still “fragile and reversible.”⁶

Key Debates

The U.S. government continues to face major strategic and operational decisions about its engagement in the war in Afghanistan. Elements of the debate that continue to attract attention include

- refining U.S. national interests in Afghanistan and the region, and a desired end-state based on those interests;
- determining which diplomatic, economic, and military approaches to adopt, what resources to commit to support those approaches, and how those approaches ought to evolve over time;

¹ See Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/. See also Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review, December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>.

² See Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, December 1, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

³ Lisbon Summit Declaration, November 20, 2010, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm?mode=pressrelease.

⁴ See Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review, December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>.

⁵ “COMISAF Assessment,” Letter to ISAF, January 25, 2011, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/COMISAF/LTR%20To%20the%20Troops%20Jan%2025%202011.pdf>.

⁶ See Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review, December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>.

- helping marshal a coordinated application of international efforts in Afghanistan; and
- prioritizing the Afghanistan war versus other U.S. national security imperatives in the context of a constrained fiscal environment.

Avenues available to Congress for exercising oversight of these issues include authorizing and appropriating funding for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and the region; shaping policy through directive legislation; confirming senior administration officials with responsibility for the Afghanistan effort; holding oversight hearings to assess policy formulation and execution; and extending or adjusting Administration reporting requirements.

Origins of the War

While the proximate cause of the current war in Afghanistan was the set of terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the war takes place against the backdrop of three decades of tumultuous Afghan history including communist rule, the Soviet invasion, civil war, and the repressive Taliban regime.

Prelude to War⁷

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to shore up a puppet communist regime. During the 1980's, armed Afghan resistance groups known as *mujahedin* waged war against Soviet forces and their allies among the Afghan security forces.⁸ During that period, the U.S. government, through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), provided covert assistance to *mujahedin* groups, working through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI).

In 1989, Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan, and in April 1992, the Soviet-backed Afghan regime in Kabul fell to *mujahedin* forces, which established a form of rule including a rotating presidency. In November 1994, the ethnic Pashtun-dominated Taliban movement led by Mullah Omar seized the city of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan.⁹ In 1996, the Taliban captured Kabul and then retained control over much of the country until ousted by the U.S.-led military campaign in 2001. Throughout its tenure, the Taliban continued to face armed opposition, in particular from the Northern Alliance, a loose network dominated by ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks primarily from northern Afghanistan. Key legacies of Afghanistan's years of civil war, conflict, and oppressive

⁷ For background see Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004); George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of How the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed the History of our Times* (New York: Grove Press, 2003); Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York: Vintage Departures, 2001); and Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁸ The plural noun "mujahedin" (singular "mujahid"), borrowed from Arabic and now used in standard English, refers to a group of Muslims waging "jihad," or "a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty." See "jihad," Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2008, Merriam-Webster online, available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jihad>; and "mujahideen," Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2008, Merriam-Webster online, available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mujahideen>.

⁹ The term "Taliban," in Pashto, is the plural of "talib" (student), which is derived from Arabic. See "Taliban," Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2008, Merriam-Webster online, available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Taliban>.

rule included the deaths of over a million people, the displacement of millions more, the proliferation of available weapons, and the destruction of key institutions and infrastructure.

Major Combat Operations

The immediate reason for U.S. military operations in Afghanistan was the linkage of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to al Qaeda, which had trained and operated under Taliban protection in Afghanistan. In an address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush stated U.S. demands for Taliban action, warning: “The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate.”¹⁰

On October 7, 2001, following the refusal of the Taliban regime to cease harboring al Qaeda, the U.S. government launched military operations in Afghanistan, with the stated purpose of disrupting the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and of attacking the military capability of the Taliban regime.¹¹

In contrast to the lengthy, iterative preparations that preceded the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. planning process for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan was extremely condensed. The concept of operations was based on Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s vision of defense transformation, including the idea that a heavier reliance on cutting-edge technology and precision weaponry could make possible the deployment of smaller-sized conventional ground forces.

Military operations were preceded and complemented by work by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with Afghan opposition groups on the ground. Initial U.S. operations relied on the use of special operations forces (SOF), enabled by air assets, working by, with and through indigenous partners, in particular the Northern Alliance. Many U.S. defense experts regarded the operations as an important demonstration of operational “jointness”—the ability of Military Services to work together seamlessly. The United Kingdom and Australia also deployed forces to support the major combat phase of operations, and dozens of other countries provided basing, access and overflight permission.¹²

¹⁰ The full list of demands included “Deliver to United States authorities all of the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist and every person and their support structure to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating.” See President George W. Bush, Address to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

¹¹ See Statement by President George W. Bush, October 7, 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

¹² The United Kingdom’s publicly stated campaign objectives included bringing Osama bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders to justice; preventing them from posing a further terrorist threat; and ensuring that Afghanistan ceased to harbor terrorists; in pursuit of the broader objective to “do everything possible to eliminate the threat posed by international terrorism.” See Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom, “Defeating International Terrorism: Campaign Objectives,” October 16, 2001, available at <http://www.mod.uk>. For a detailed discussion of the March 2002 Operation Anaconda, which included SOF and conventional forces, coalition partners, and Afghan forces, see Sean Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005). For an analysis of the lessons of Afghanistan operations for future warfighting, see Stephen Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2002.

The demise of the Taliban regime came quickly. In November 2001, the Taliban fled Kabul, and in December they left their stronghold, the southern city of Kandahar. It is generally understood that in December 2001, key al Qaeda and Taliban leaders fled across the border into Pakistan.

Post-Taliban Developments

The major combat operations phase was regarded as a quick success by its Afghan protagonists and their U.S. and other international partners, but the challenges were far from over. The new Afghan leadership faced the profound political challenge of consolidating a fractious, scarred state with very few resources. The new leaders also faced potential violent challenges, both from resurgent al Qaeda and Taliban leaders who were defeated but not eliminated, and from Afghan local powerbrokers, strengthened by years of battle-hardened autonomy and resistance, who might be displeased by their own loss of influence in the emerging post-Taliban order.

Bonn Process

To fill the political void, in December 2001, in Bonn, Germany, the United Nations launched the so-called Bonn Process by hosting the Bonn Conference. Participants included representatives of four Afghan opposition groupings, and observers included representatives of neighboring and other key countries including the United States. The resulting Bonn Agreement created an Afghan Interim Authority to serve as the “repository of Afghan sovereignty” and outlined a political process for producing a new constitution and choosing a new Afghan government. In contrast to the model pursued in Iraq from 2003 to 2004, in Afghanistan there was no period of formal occupation in which an international authority exercised sovereignty on behalf of the Afghans.¹³ In accordance with the provisions of the Bonn Agreement, a large meeting—a *loya jirga*—was held in June 2002, at which Hamid Karzai was elected head of the new Afghan Transitional Authority. A new constitution was adopted in January 2004; presidential elections, in which Karzai was elected, were held in October 2004; and National Assembly elections were held in September 2005.

The Afghan People in Post-Taliban Afghanistan

Afghan people have reportedly experienced post-Taliban Afghanistan in a variety of ways, depending in part on their geographical home bases and their circumstances under Taliban rule. For many Afghans, the end of the Taliban regime has meant an end to some specific forms of repressive rule. For some, displaced from home by years of war and conflict, regime change has meant an opportunity to return to their home villages. For Afghans in some areas, a growing insurgent presence and the proximity of fertile fields for profitable poppy-growing have created

¹³ In accordance with the provisions of the Bonn Agreement, a large meeting—a “loya jirga”—was held in June 2002, at which Hamid Karzai was elected head of the new Afghan Transitional Authority. A new constitution was adopted in January 2004; presidential elections, in which Karzai was elected, were held in October 2004; and National Assembly elections were held in September 2005. See the *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*, Bonn, December 5, 2001, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.af/Documents/ImportantDoc/The%20Bonn%20Agreement.pdf>.

new sources of instability and fear. For Afghans across the country, regime change has not yet led to any certainty about future prospects for stability.¹⁴

Strategy

“Strategy” is commonly understood to include a statement of objectives, or desired ends; the ways and means designed to achieve those ends, prioritized by importance; and the roles and responsibilities of key players in executing those ways and means.¹⁵

Strategy-making for Afghanistan is particularly complex for two main reasons. First, the process is complicated by the range of major stake-holders acting in Afghanistan to achieve strategic ends. These include—in addition to the insurgent groups—the Afghan government, NATO, the U.S. government and other bilateral partners, and key regional leaders and neighboring states including Pakistan. Each of these may have its own—or even competing sets of—interests and priorities. Military strategy, in turn, is not easily separable from broader grand strategy for Afghanistan, since security is essential for progress in other areas, and since military forces play key supporting roles in non-security activities.

Second, the process is complicated by the wide range of activities many stake-holders undertake. These include not only security but also, for example, civilian capacity-building, the rule of law, and economic development. Those fields, in turn, are closely linked empirically—for example, long-term development requires a relatively stable environment, and successful local law enforcement efforts must be predicated on some form of rule of law.

Afghan Strategy

Arguably the most important strategic vision for the future of Afghanistan is the vision of Afghans themselves. President Hamid Karzai’s own views are particularly salient since he leads a very centralized, presidential state structure, and he has been the lead executive authority since the end of the Taliban regime.

Over time, the consistent theme of President Karzai’s strategic vision for Afghanistan has been Afghan sovereignty. At the January 2010 London Conference, co-hosted by the governments of Afghanistan and the United Kingdom, and the United Nations, and with participation by representatives of more than 60 states, President Karzai summarized this theme as “Afghan leadership, Afghan ownership.”¹⁶

The theme of sovereignty has undergirded Karzai’s discussions of a wide range of specific issues, from governance and development to security. For example, calling for bringing all international and Afghan private security contracting companies under control and regulation by the Afghan government, he stressed, “We must ensure the monopoly of the Afghan state over the use of

¹⁴ Communications from Afghan local community members in north, east, south, west Afghanistan, 2009, 2010.

¹⁵ It is a fundamental principle of military theory that war is driven by political goals of one kind or another. The Prussian writer Carl von Clausewitz argued that policy “...will permeate all military operations, and, in so far as their violent nature will admit, it will have a continuous influence on them.” Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.)

¹⁶ President Hamid Karzai, Opening Remarks, London Conference, January 28, 2010.

force.”¹⁷ Calling for Afghan leadership of detention and prosecution activities, in his second presidential inaugural speech in November 2009, he called these activities “the authority and responsibility of the Afghan government.”¹⁸

U.S. Strategy

U.S. government strategy for Afghanistan has evolved over time from immediate military aims in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, to a comprehensive strategy with multiple components.

Post-9/11 Aims

When the U.S. government launched military operations in Afghanistan shortly after the 9/11 attacks, the stated U.S. aims were narrow: to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.¹⁹ The U.S.-led operations quickly achieved those aims by removing the Taliban from political power.

Bush Administration Strategy

For the war in Afghanistan, the Bush Administration did not conduct a rigorous internal strategic review or produce a formal written strategy along the lines of the November 2005 *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*.²⁰ In general, most practitioners and observers agree that under the Bush Administration, the war in Afghanistan largely took a back seat, in terms of leadership time and attention, and resourcing, to the war in Iraq. Yet while no strategy was formally articulated, the multi-faceted approaches adopted and resources committed, though limited, suggested an effort broadly aimed at helping to stabilize the new, post-Taliban order.

Toward the end of the Administration, in September 2008, in a speech at the National Defense University announcing the commitment of additional resources, President Bush gave a clear characterization of the major facets of the effort. He stated that the 3,500 additional U.S. Marines would deploy to Afghanistan, and that together with additional troops supplied by NATO Allies, they would constitute a “quiet surge.” Those troops would be used “to provide security for the Afghan people, protect Afghanistan’s infrastructure and democratic institutions, and help ensure access to services like education and health care.” U.S. efforts would also include helping Afghans develop additional security forces, and increasing the direct involvement of Afghan tribes. More experts from U.S. government civilian agencies would be deployed to help Afghans improve governance and to jumpstart the economy. And the United States would help Pakistan “defeat Taliban and al Qaeda fighters hiding in remote border regions of their country.”²¹ What President Bush did not include in this description of the effort in Afghanistan was a statement about overarching U.S. goals and objectives.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ President Hamid Karzai, Inaugural Speech (unofficial translation), November 19, 2009.

¹⁹ See Statement by President George W. Bush, October 7, 2001, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

²⁰ National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, November 2005.

²¹ President George W. Bush, Distinguished Lecture Program, National Defense University, September 9, 2008, available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/09/20080909.html>.

Obama Administration Strategy

From the outset, the Obama Administration has indicated its intention to direct more leadership time and attention to the war in Afghanistan. In his inaugural address, President Obama mentioned the war, noting that the United States would help “forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan.”²² Shortly afterward, he launched a comprehensive policy review, led by Bruce Riedel of the Brookings Institution. Even before the review was completed, he approved the deployment of approximately 17,000 additional U.S. forces to Afghanistan, based on requests that had been submitted earlier by ISAF Commander (“COMISAF”) General David McKiernan.

In March 2009, President Obama announced the results of the policy review, noting that the process had included consultations with the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and of key Allies and partners, as well as with some international organizations. The primary result, he stated, was a “comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.” That close linkage of U.S. strategy for the two neighboring countries was new, and it was underscored by the appointment of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke to serve as Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP).

In the March 2009 speech, President Obama stated that the U.S. “core goal” was “to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.” Key lines of activity, toward that end, were to include reversing the Taliban’s gains; “promoting a more capable and accountable Afghan government”; growing and training the Afghan National Security Forces; deploying civilian technical expertise to support governance and economic development; and supporting a reconciliation process to pull all but the “uncompromising core” of insurgent fighters off of the battlefield.²³

COMISAF Initial Assessment

In May 2009, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates requested the resignation of General David McKiernan, who served simultaneously in the NATO role of ISAF Commander, and the U.S. role of Commanding General of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. Secretary Gates stated that he sought “fresh thinking” and “fresh eyes” for the mission.²⁴ GEN McKiernan’s successor in both roles, General Stanley McChrystal, was tasked by both the U.S. and NATO chains of command to conduct a “60-day initial assessment” of the mission and the feasibility of accomplishing it. To do so, GEN McChrystal invited a small team of outside experts to take a look at the overall strategy and campaign, while ISAF staff teams conducted assessments of specific issues such as civil-military integration, detention operations, civilian casualties, and strategic communications.²⁵

²² President Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/read_the_inaugural_address/.

²³ President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/. See also the *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group’s Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan*, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf, which uses somewhat different language to describe the goal and approaches.

²⁴ Ann Scott Tyson, “Top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan is Fired,” *Washington Post*, May 12, 2009.

²⁵ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009. The author was part of the “small team of outside experts”.

The final *Initial Assessment* report, submitted by GEN McChrystal under his own signature to both chains of command was leaked to the *Washington Post* and published in redacted form.²⁶ In the assessment, GEN McChrystal characterized the situation in Afghanistan as “serious” and noted that “the overall situation is deteriorating.” He argued forcefully that “failure to gain the initiative and reverse insurgent momentum in the near-term (next 12 months) ... risks an outcome where defeating the insurgency is no longer possible.”

In order to gain the initiative, GEN McChrystal called for a “properly resourced”, comprehensive counter-insurgency campaign. His assessment introduced several major innovations in thinking about the campaign. First, he prioritized efforts to support responsive and accountable governance equally with security efforts, stressing the Afghan people’s “crisis of confidence in the government.” Second, he advocated raising the target endstrengths for the Afghan National Security Forces substantially, to a total of 400,000 forces, and ensuring their effectiveness through “radically improved partnership [with ISAF forces] at every level.” Third, he introduced geographic prioritization of effort across Afghanistan as a whole—a significant change from past approaches in which each part of the country was managed *de facto* as a “national” campaign led by the Allied country with troops deployed there. And fourth, he stressed the need to change ISAF’s operational culture in two key ways—to more closely interact with the population, and to significantly improve internal unity of effort.

Fall 2009 Strategy Review

In Fall 2009, the Obama Administration launched a wide-ranging review of strategy and resource options for the war in Afghanistan. The review considered both GEN McChrystal’s *Initial Assessment*, and a separate, classified set of “resource recommendations”—options for troop level increases together with risks associated with each option—that he submitted.²⁷ At issue was the need to balance achieving sufficient results to protect U.S. national interests with avoiding an open-ended commitment. During the review, some U.S. government officials reportedly argued for a narrow focus on counter-terrorism, including deploying a small additional number of Special Operations Forces (SOF). Some others reportedly amended that view by supporting a “CT-plus” approach, which called for some additional SOF together with some additional emphasis on training the Afghan National Security Forces. Still others reportedly argued in favor of a more comprehensive approach, more closely in line with the multi-faceted campaign described in GEN McChrystal’s Assessment.²⁸

In December 2009, in a speech at West Point, President Obama announced the results of his Administration’s strategy review. He confirmed that the U.S. core goal, articulated in March 2009, remained unchanged: “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.” He described the main objectives of the effort: “deny[ing] al Qaeda a safe haven”; “revers[ing] the Taliban’s momentum and deny[ing] it the ability to overthrow the government”; and “strengthen[ing] the capacity of Afghanistan’s security forces and government so that they can

²⁶ General Stanley McChrystal, Commander’s Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140.

²⁷ Communications from ISAF and Administration officials, 2009. See also Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

²⁸ Communications from ISAF and Administration officials, 2009; and *Obama’s Wars*.

take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future." To these ends, he stated, the United States would employ a military effort, launch a civilian "surge", and work to further an "effective partnership with Pakistan."²⁹

In the West Point speech, President Obama announced the deployment of an additional 30,000 U.S. troops, reportedly 10,000 fewer than the middle-range option presented by GEN McChrystal. The President noted the expectation that NATO Allies and partners would increase their own troop commitments.³⁰ Some practitioners noted at the time that while relying on Allies could conceivably yield 40,000 additional troops altogether, troop contributions from different countries should not be regarded as completely fungible, given different formal caveats on their activities, different capabilities, and the additional friction inherent in all coalition rather than national operations.³¹

In the speech, President Obama also, for the first in the history of the war, established a partial timeline. He stated that in July 2011, the United States would "begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan." This measure was intended in part, he stated, to give Afghans a "sense of urgency" about making progress. His explanation that "we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground," did not clarify the scope or scale of the drawdown slated to begin in July 2011, or the criteria that would be used to make those determinations.

December 2010 Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review

In June 2010, President Obama relieved his top commander on the ground, GEN McChrystal, based on inflammatory comments reported by the *Rolling Stone*,³² and replaced him with General David Petraeus, who had served until then as the Commander of U.S. Central Command, which has responsibility for a broad region including Afghanistan. Unlike the arrival of GEN McChrystal one year earlier, the arrival of GEN Petraeus did not trigger a top-to-bottom strategic review, although the new COMISAF did gradually refine ISAF's approaches.³³

In late 2010, the Obama Administration conducted the Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review (APAR), which was designed, according to Administration officials, to gauge progress in the campaign rather than to re-evaluate the strategy. In a December 2010 speech, President Obama announced the results of the review. He confirmed that the core goal remained unchanged—"disrupting, dismantling and defeating al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and preventing its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future", and he pointedly contrasted that goal to "nation-building, because it is Afghans who must build their nation." President Obama's characterization of the major elements of the effort was quite similar to his December 2009 characterization: targeting the Taliban; growing the Afghan National Security Forces; supporting the "delivery of basic services, as well as transparency and accountability"; supporting an Afghan

²⁹ President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, West Point, New York, December 1, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

³⁰ *Ibid.* and communications from ISAF officials, 2009. See also Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

³¹ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009.

³² Michael Hastings, "The Runaway General," *Rolling Stone*, June 22, 2010.

³³ Communications from ISAF officials, 2010. The author participated in that refinement.

political process of reconciliation; and working with Pakistan to insist “that terrorist safe havens within their borders must be dealt with.”

Characterizing progress on the ground, the President noted that “we are seeing significant progress” against the core goal—that al Qaeda senior leadership was under more pressure, and that “we are clearing more areas from Taliban control and more Afghans are reclaiming their communities.” He cautioned, however, that “... the gains we’ve made are still fragile and reversible.”

The speech included two new elements. First, President Obama affirmed the goal agreed to at the November 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit, to move toward “a transition to full Afghan lead for security that will begin early next year [2011] and will conclude in 2014.” The 2014 marker, initially proposed by President Karzai and later embraced by NATO, was a marked addition to U.S. strategy. Second, President Obama stressed that the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan would be enduring, in the form of a “new strategic partnership” to be elaborated in 2011, as a signal of U.S. commitment. President Obama did not address the proposed content or expected resource implications of that partnership.³⁴

U.S. Strategy in 2011

In early 2011, the Obama Administration was reportedly at work on several related initiatives—further refining a description of desired conditions that ought to pertain in Afghanistan in 2014, and drafting a basic vision for the long-term U.S.-Afghan strategic partnership, to prepare for talks with the Afghan government. A refined strategic partnership document would presumably update the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership from 2005.³⁵

NATO Strategy

NATO plays a central role in Afghanistan as the sponsor of ISAF. NATO strategy is articulated in decisions and declarations by its political leadership body, the North Atlantic Council, and then further reflected in classified NATO operational planning. As a multi-lateral organization, NATO is both a collective and the sum of its parts. The U.S. government plays a significant leadership role in both ISAF and NATO as a whole, and thus helps shape NATO and ISAF strategy and approaches. At the same time, the United States and all other Allies may have national interests in Afghanistan and the region that are not shared by all ISAF troop contributors.

At the Bucharest NATO Summit in April 2008, NATO issued a streamlined but clear strategic vision for Afghanistan. That vision established four “guiding principles”: a firm and shared long-term commitment; support for enhanced Afghan leadership and responsibility; a comprehensive approach by the international community, bringing together civilian and military efforts; and increased cooperation and engagement with Afghanistan’s neighbors, especially Pakistan. The document also included a “vision of success,” which is essentially a statement of objectives:

³⁴ President Barack Obama, “Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review,” December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>. See also National Security Staff, “Overview of the Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review,” December 15, 2010.

³⁵ See Joint Declaration of the United States-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership, May 23, 2005.

“extremism and terrorism will no longer pose a threat to stability; Afghan National Security Forces will be in the lead and self-sufficient; and the Afghan government will be able to extend the reach of good governance, reconstruction, and development throughout the country to the benefit of all its citizens.”³⁶ What this strategic vision did not provide was a clear articulation of the specific ways and means ISAF would use to achieve those objectives.

In October 2009, at an informal ministerial meeting of NATO Defense Ministers in Bratislava, including the Defense Ministers of non-NATO troop-contributing countries, GEN McChrystal briefed participants on the findings of his *Initial Assessment*. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen noted “broad support from all ministers of this overall counterinsurgency approach.”³⁷ Participants in Bratislava also agreed on four priorities for the campaign in Afghanistan: (1) focus upon the Afghan population; (2) enhance efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces; (3) promote better Afghan governance; (4) engage more effectively with Afghanistan’s neighbors, particularly Pakistan. At the same session, the Ministers approved a new strategic concept for the process of “transitioning” lead security responsibility to Afghans.³⁸

In November 2010, at the NATO Lisbon Summit, NATO articulated a clear strategic vision for Afghanistan, expressing its support for: “a sovereign, independent, democratic, secure and stable Afghanistan that will never again be a safe haven for terrorists and terrorism, and ... a better future for the Afghan people.” Allies reaffirmed their “long-term commitment to Afghanistan,” and NATO and the government of Afghanistan committed to a “robust, enduring partnership.” That partnership would complement the work of ISAF and extend beyond it; specific cooperation measures would be elaborated later, by mutual agreement.³⁹

The Threat

Practitioners and observers suggest that Afghanistan faces critical challenges from more than a single insurgency. The insurgencies themselves are multiple with varying degrees of cohesion, various aims, various links to al Qaeda, and various ties across the border into Pakistan. Criminal patronage networks—including drug lords, powerbrokers, and some government officials—empower the insurgencies directly through funding and other forms of support, and indirectly by alienating the Afghan people. Finally, many of the practices of the international community, over time, have inadvertently empowered malign actors and frustrated the Afghan people, further bolstering at least tacit support for the insurgencies.⁴⁰

³⁶ “Strategic Vision,” NATO, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-052e.html>.

³⁷ Thom Shanker and Mark Landler, “NATO Ministers Endorse Wider Afghan Effort,” October 23, 2009. Such support from an informal defense ministerial does not, however, constitute political endorsement from the North Atlantic Council.

³⁸ NATO press release, “NATO Ministers agree on key priorities for Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 2009.

³⁹ See Lisbon Summit Declaration, November 20, 2010, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm?mode=pressrelease; and Declaration by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on an Enduring Partnership, November 20, 2010, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/official-texts/Enduring%20Partnership%20NATO-GIRoA%2020%20Nov%202010.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, and Administration officials, 2009, 2010, 2011.

The Insurgencies

The insurgent threat in Afghanistan is best characterized as a loose network that includes three major insurgent groups—the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG)—most of whose members are Afghans.⁴¹ Each reportedly enjoys some facilitation from foreign fighters, and some degree of safe haven in Pakistan for its senior leadership. The three groups do not follow a single over-arching strategy. While all three utilize violence as a tool, the primary aim is to control the Afghan population—whether through intimidation, the provision of some services, or a combination thereof—and to drive coalition forces out of the country in order to better exercise that influence.⁴²

The role of al Qaeda in the insurgency in Afghanistan is largely indirect, as a provider of funding, facilitation, and some ideological support, and al Qaeda's presence inside Afghanistan may be quite limited. In January 2011, the Commander of ISAF's Regional Command based in Kandahar noted, "I know of no al Qaeda in Regional Command South."⁴³

Current Security Conditions

In general, the security climate in Afghanistan has tended to follow cyclical patterns, based on the seasons. The spring poppy harvest season draws some workers-for-hire away from the insurgency; insurgent leaders, who profit from the poppy crop, support this pattern. The forbidding winter cold makes movement and many activities harder, and usually finds some insurgents recuperating across the border in Pakistan. The warmer spring weather provides an opportunity for insurgents to attempt operations. Given the cyclical patterns, changes in security trends are best evaluated by year-to-year rather than month-to-month comparisons.

Recent years, by all accounts, have witnessed an upswing in security incidents. Many practitioners date the growing violence from mid-2006, when NATO assumed security responsibility first for southern, and then for eastern Afghanistan. Minister of Defense Wardak, for example, noted that in 2006 the insurgents "came on in a big way," and suggested that their intent had been to weaken political will in NATO capitals.⁴⁴

As of Fall 2010, the Department of Defense reported that "overall kinetic events [were] up 300 percent since 2007, and up an additional 70 percent since 2009."⁴⁵ In early 2011, officials and

⁴¹ For background about insurgent groups in Afghanistan, see Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008).

⁴² Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010. See also General Stanley McChrystal, Commander's Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140.

⁴³ DoD News Briefing with Major General James Terry and Senior Civilian Representative Henry Ensher, Regional Command-South, January 13, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4754>. Reports persist of some al Qaeda presence. For example, the *Long War Journal* reported, on the basis of a martyrdom statement, the death in Afghanistan of a senior al Qaeda communications operative, Bekkay Harrach, a German national affiliated with both al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. See Bill Roggio, "Senior German al Qaeda Leader Killed in Afghanistan," *Long War Journal*, January 19, 2011, available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/01/senior_german_al_qae.php.

⁴⁴ Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

⁴⁵ See Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010, (continued...)

observers noted that as insurgent networks increasingly came under pressure and were disrupted by the stronger operational tempo of Afghan and coalition military operations, insurgent groups were seeking ways to make a more spectacular impact. It was reported that over a four-week period ending in February 2011, 116 Afghan civilians had been killed in seven suicide attacks, ranging from Nangarhar province in the east, to Kandahar in the south, to Faryab in the north.⁴⁶ ISAF officials expected such high-profile attacks, including assassination attempts against government officials and community leaders, to continue.⁴⁷

Taliban

The Taliban itself, Afghan and ISAF officials note, is more a network than a single organization.⁴⁸ The Taliban emerged from the Afghan civil war of the early and mid-1990's, and then the organization ruled Afghanistan from its capture of Kabul in 1996 until its defeat in 2001. Mullah Mohammed Omar, the *de facto* head of state during Taliban rule, is generally assumed to be alive and leading the organization from Pakistan. In July 2010, he reportedly released guidance to his "force", calling on them to fight coalition forces to the death; to capture or kill Afghans, including women, who support the Afghan government or the coalition; to actively recruit workers with access to coalition facilities; and to acquire more heavy weapons.⁴⁹

The group is often referred to as the Quetta Shura Taliban, after the city in Pakistan that serves as home to its leadership council.⁵⁰ The Taliban reportedly receives support from some current and/or former Pakistani officials, including members of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), in the form of logistics, medical, and training assistance.⁵¹

In Afghanistan, the Taliban's central geographical focus is their "spiritual home", Kandahar, but they reportedly maintain a "shadow governance" presence in most or all of Afghanistan's provinces. The apparent purpose of the shadow governments is to deepen their control over the population, in part by providing some basic services such as rapid justice and by capitalizing on popular disaffection with the current government.⁵²

(...continued)

submitted in accordance with §1230 of P.L. 110-81, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008* as amended. The report is current through September 30, 2010.

⁴⁶ Alissa Rubin, "Taliban Bet on Fear Over Brawn as Tactic," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2011.

⁴⁷ Communications from ISAF officials, 2011.

⁴⁸ On the Taliban in general, see Major Shahid Afsar, Pakistan Army, Major Chris Samples, U.S. Army, and Major Thomas Wood, U.S. Army, "The Taliban: An Organizational Analysis," *Military Review*, vo. 88, no. 3 (May-June 2008).

⁴⁹ See Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010; and Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, "Mullah Omar Orders Taliban to Attack Civilians, Afghan Women", *The Long War Journal*, July 28, 2010, available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/07/mullah_omar_orders_t.php.

⁵⁰ See Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's Insurgency: A Pragmatic Approach toward Peace and Reconciliation," United States Institute of Peace, September 2008. Stanekzai, who held a fellowship at the U.S. Institute of Peace, was previously a senior GIRoA official.

⁵¹ See Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008).

⁵² General Stanley McChrystal, Commander's Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140.

Haqqani Network

The Haqqani network (HQN) is closely associated with the Taliban and falls under the broad umbrella of its Quetta-based leadership, but it also maintains a distinct identity and organizational cohesion.⁵³ HQN was long led by Jalaluddin Haqqani, who fought as a *mujahedin* leader against Soviet forces, receiving substantial assistance from the CIA by way of Pakistan's ISI.⁵⁴ When the Taliban came to power, he joined the government as a Minister but retained a separate power base in his home Zadran district and tribe, east of Kabul. His son Sirajudin has reportedly assumed day-to-day leadership of the organization while Jalaluddin maintains an advisory role.

The Haqqani network reportedly utilizes a base of operations in North Waziristan, part of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the border with Afghanistan. ISAF officials believe that HQN uses the base to plan and launch attacks targeting Afghan and coalition forces inside Afghanistan. Pakistani forces have long been unwilling, or unable, to take military action against HQN in North Waziristan.⁵⁵

The Haqqani network's primary geographical focus inside Afghanistan is the eastern provinces of Paktia, Paktika and Khowst—the traditional Zadran tribal homeland. HQN has been able to use these areas as launching pads to carry out violence in the approaches to Kabul and in Kabul city itself.⁵⁶ HQN reportedly enjoys closer ties with al Qaeda than the other major Afghan insurgent groups. Some recent reports suggest emerging close links between HQN and Lashkar-e Taiba, the Pakistani terrorist group responsible for the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai and expert in orchestrating complex suicide attacks.⁵⁷

Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG)

The third major Afghan insurgent group is Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), named after its leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who led *mujahedin* fighters against Soviet forces. At that time, his organization, then known as the Hezb-e Islami, received substantial aid from the U.S. government, which reportedly considered him a key ally. He twice held the title of Prime Minister during the early 1990's civil war period, before seeking refuge in Iran when the Taliban came to power. Hekmatyar later re-emerged in Afghanistan as the leader of the HiG insurgent group.

Like the other groups, the HiG enjoys safe haven across the border in Pakistan. The HiG's primary geographical focus inside Afghanistan is in the northeast, in Nangarhar, Kunar, and Nuristan provinces, areas rich in timber and gem resources that the HiG is interested in exploiting. Unlike the other two groups, the HiG maintains a political wing including affiliates who serve in the Afghan government. The HiG has leaned forward in exploring potential reconciliation opportunities, including putting forward to the Afghan government a 15-point

⁵³ For an excellent description and analysis of the Haqqani Network, see Jeffrey A. Dressler, *The Haqqani Network: From Pakistan to Afghanistan*, Institute for the Study of War, October 2010.

⁵⁴ For background about Haqqani, see Jay Solomon, "Troubled Border: Failed Courtship of Warlord Trips up U.S. in Afghanistan," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 8, 2007.

⁵⁵ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010.

⁵⁶ Dressler; and Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010.

⁵⁷ See Alissa J. Rubin, "Taliban Bet on Fear over Brawn as Tactic," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2011.

peace proposal.⁵⁸ The HiG's relations with the Taliban are sometimes fraught—affiliates of the two groups have clashed in a struggle for influence in northeastern Afghanistan.⁵⁹

“Criminal Patronage Networks”

Practitioners and observers suggest that a significant challenge to Afghanistan's prospects for future stability is posed by “criminal patronage networks”, broadly understood to be loose networks linking powerbrokers, criminal bosses, and some government officials, at the national and sub-national levels, which skim state revenues and distribute patronage and largesse selectively. In some cases they may fund the insurgencies directly. They also fuel the insurgencies indirectly by alienating the Afghan people, who may then choose to give their active or tacit support to insurgents.⁶⁰

In his 2009 Initial Assessment, then-ISAF Commander GEN McChrystal recognized the deleterious impact that powerbrokers were having on stability. He stressed the “unpunished abuse of power by corrupt officials and powerbrokers” as a key contributing factor to the Afghan people's “crisis of confidence” in the Afghan government. He described that crisis as one of the two elements, together with the insurgencies, of the threat to the overall mission.⁶¹

By Summer 2010, ISAF officials and other members of the international community had begun to think of the challenge posed by powerbrokers in terms of networks—linked sets of relationships used to foster and exercise power and influence. That growing understanding was facilitated by both a broader definition of the “threat” to the overall effort, and the availability of more and better analytical tools for teasing out key relationships. For example, the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), which reports to both U.S. Embassy Kabul and the Commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, has made substantial contributions to current understanding.⁶² In his January 2011 letter to the troops, ISAF Commander GEN Petraeus argued that in order to build on security gains made in 2010, “we will have to expand our efforts to help Afghan officials implement President Karzai's direction to combat corruption and the criminal patronage networks that undermine the development of effective Afghan institutions.”⁶³

Kabul Bank and National-Level Institutions

One critical question is the extent to which criminal patronage networks extend their reach into the highest levels of the Afghan government. In a recent article in *The New Yorker*, Dexter Filkins argued that “it's no longer enough to say that corruption permeates the Afghan state. Corruption,

⁵⁸ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010.

⁵⁹ See Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010

⁶⁰ Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, and Administration officials, 2010, 2011.

⁶¹ General Stanley McChrystal, Commander's Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140.

⁶² Communications from ISAF officials, 2010.

⁶³ General David Petraeus, COMISAF Assessment, letter to ISAF dated January 25, 2011, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/COMISAF/LTR%20To%20the%20Troops%20Jan%2025%202011.pdf>.

by and large, is the Afghan state... The Afghan government does not so much serve the people as it preys on them.”⁶⁴

A recent focus of particular concern has been Kabul Bank. The Bank faces allegations that some seven hundred million dollars are missing from the bank, and that those funds were used to buy property in Dubai and to purchase political patronage through “campaign contributions” to senior Afghan officials. Kabul Bank is of interest and concern in part because the U.S. government has used it to channel funding to pay some Afghan salaries, including for members of the Afghan National Security Forces. Of potentially greater concern are the Bank’s links with Afghanistan’s political leadership: its key shareholders include close relatives of Afghanistan’s senior-most officials, and the Bank’s “campaign contributions,” some allege, were directed toward some senior officials of the Afghan government.⁶⁵

Sub-National-Level Powerbrokers

Many practitioners and observers agree that patronage networks are alive and well at sub-national levels, where opportunities for access to revenue streams include international border crossings, as well as the contracts let and the assistance programs supported by the international community.⁶⁶ In the pervasive exercise of “influence” at sub-national levels, it is not always clear whether the law has been violated. But the influence exercised raises tough questions for the international community about the appropriate balance between getting things done by working closely with those Afghans who can produce results, and crafting an Afghan system that the Afghan people will accept. Some observers suggest that since the leverage that local powerbrokers are able to exert depends at least in part on the patronage, access, and resources they receive from higher levels of the Afghan system, the challenges—and possible remedies—cannot easily be locally circumscribed.

Ahmed Wali Karzai

Perhaps the most prominent “powerbroker”, in the literal sense of the term, has been Ahmed Wali Karzai (AWK), President Karzai’s half-brother. AWK’s official position as the head of the Provincial Council of Kandahar province does not convey significant authority or resources on its own, but his personal influence, by all accounts, is quite extensive. AWK has faced allegations of involvement in the poppy trade, of maintaining his own private militia, of illegally seizing land, of orchestrating profitable monopolies over business sectors including private security contracting and long-distance trucking, and of exercising undue influence over government appointments within the province. His largesse, it is claimed, benefits some but explicitly leaves others out and may be serving to exacerbate inter-tribal tensions.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Dexter Filkins, “Letter from Kabul: The Great Afghan Bank Heist,” *The New Yorker*, January 31, 2011.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, and communications from ISAF officials, 2010 and 2011.

⁶⁶ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010, 2011.

⁶⁷ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010, 2011. For background, see Carl Forsberg, *Power and Politics in Kandahar*, Institute for the Study of War, April 21, 2010. See also Joshua Partlow, “Ahmed Wali Karzai, an Ally and Obstacle to the U.S. Military in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 2010, and Kim Sengupta, “Ahmed Wali Karzai: The Stories are Very Hurtful. The Only Thing I Haven’t Been Accused of is Prostitution,” *The Independent*, October 4, 2010.

At the same time, AWK is widely regarded as someone who can get things done—a view attested to by the long lines of Afghan petitioners usually to be found at his doorstep. Reportedly, he has also long enjoyed a close relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency. And to date, little if any formal evidence of wrong-doing has been put forward. As the focus of the combined Afghan and international campaign, including support to governance as well as security, shifted to Kandahar province in 2010, the international community was forced to wrestle with the extent to which AWK could serve as a factor of stability, and the extent to which the Afghan people would be likely to accept that role.⁶⁸

General Abdul Razziq

General Abdul Razziq—until recently “Colonel”—is the Afghan Border Police commander in Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, at the border crossing with Weesh Chaman, Pakistan. Most observers agree that Razziq enjoys the patronage of Provincial Council Chairman Ahmed Wali Karzai; that he has profited mightily by skimming state revenues at the border crossing; and that he ensures the loyalty of his own border police forces through patronage and by filling the ranks with members of his own Achekzai tribe. Many international civilian and military practitioners have long regarded him as a “thug”—the *Washington Post* quoted one civilian official as saying, “Razziq is the poster child for all that is wrong with Afghanistan’s government.”⁶⁹ By some accounts, many Kandaharis are afraid of him.⁷⁰

Yet in 2010, AWK paved the way for Razziq and his forces to play a key role leading clearing operations in and around Kandahar city. ISAF officials noted that in those military operations, Razziq was clearly getting things done. Said one U.S. officer, according to the *Wall Street Journal*: “Now the first priority is to beat the Taliban. Once this is done, we can shift our attention to these illicit actors. Razziq can beat the Taliban.”⁷¹ The challenges for the international community include whether, and if so to what extent, to rely on this opportunistic partnership; and whether, if expediency proves to be the trump card in the current debate, it will be possible later on to curb any of Razziq’s behavior that is not based on the rule of law.

Governor Gul Agha Sherzai

Some practitioners and observers regard as equivocal the behavior and likely impact on long-term stability of Governor Gul Agha Sherzai of Nangarhar Province. Sherzai, originally from Kandahar, enjoys President Karzai’s personal patronage. Many observers suggest that Sherzai has been a dynamic leader—rallying his fellow Governors of nearby Laghman, Kunar and Nuristan provinces to pursue common interests, and organizing with them a broad Peace and Reconciliation Jirga aimed at reaching out to former fighters and offering them opportunities to rejoin peaceful society. Sherzai has reportedly distributed patronage to a fairly wide circle of recipients, but still selectively, drawing on revenues generated at the Torkham Gate border crossing with Pakistan, and on the drug labs that remain open despite the elimination of virtually

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “The Afghan Robin Hood,” *Washington Post*, October 4, 2010.

⁷⁰ Conversations with Kandaharis, 2010.

⁷¹ Yaroslav Trofimov and Matthew Rosenberg, “In Afghanistan, U.S. Turns ‘Malignant Actor’ into Ally,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 2010.

all poppy growing in the province⁷². Some of Sherzai's actions have appeared to some observers to contravene the rule of law. But a number of senior civilian and military U.S. officials working in the region have argued that Sherzai "gets things done", and that he is a "force of stability."⁷³

International Community Practices

Both practitioners and outside observers have increasingly recognized the many ways in which the practices of the international community in Afghanistan directly or indirectly fuel the insurgency. Through inattentive contracting and programming practices, international funds apparently have been channeled into the hands of local powerbrokers, who may pocket some of the money or use the opportunity to distribute jobs and other forms of patronage to bolster their own influence. The perceived unfairness of both kinds of behavior, in turn, tends to alienate the Afghan people.

ISAF Commanders have recognized the nature and gravity of the problem. In his Initial Assessment, GEN McChrystal described the problem of corruption and added, "ISAF errors have further compounded the problem," and he noted that this "generate[s] recruits for the insurgent groups."⁷⁴ In his recent letter to the ISAF troops, GEN Petraeus stated that in order to help Afghan officials counter corruption, "we will need to pursue initiatives to ensure that our contracting and procurement activities are part of the solution rather than a continuing part of the problem."⁷⁵

The problems have attracted the attention of Members of Congress. In a report issued in June 2010, a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform examined the sizable contract known as "host nation trucking" (HNT) supporting the U.S. supply chain in Afghanistan, in which prime contractors are responsible for providing security. The Subcommittee found that the "principal private security subcontractors on the HNT contract [were] warlords, strongmen, commanders, and militia leaders" who were effectively running protection rackets.⁷⁶

In a report issued in September 2010, the Senate Armed Services Committee assessed the role of private security contractors in Afghanistan by examining several case studies in great detail. The Committee concluded that U.S.- and UN-funded contracts were directly benefiting Afghan warlords and that those warlords, in turn, had been "linked to anti-coalition activities, murder, bribery, and kidnapping."⁷⁷

⁷² Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010.

⁷³ Communications from ISAF and U.S. Embassy officials, 2009, 2010.

⁷⁴ General Stanley McChrystal, Commander's Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140.

⁷⁵ General David Petraeus, COMISAF Assessment, letter to ISAF dated January 25, 2011, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/COMISAF/LTR%20To%20the%20Troops%20Jan%2025%202011.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, Warlord, Inc.: Extortion and Corruption along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan, Report of the Majority Staff, June 2010.

⁷⁷ Senate Armed Services Committee, Inquiry into the Role and Oversight of Private Security Contractors in Afghanistan, September 28, 2010, p.ix.

Structure of the International Effort

Over time, since the removal of the Taliban regime, the complex and multi-faceted international effort in Afghanistan has evolved in scope, scale, participation, and focus.

Leadership of the Effort

Afghanistan, which lacks sufficient institutional, material, and human resources to make substantial progress on its own, relies deeply on the international community to provide support. Over time, there have been changes in both leadership responsibility for international community efforts, and the balance of responsibilities between the international community and the Afghan government.

Lead Nation Model

The “lead nation” model of international assistance to Afghanistan was adopted at a donors’ conference held in Tokyo in early 2002. Five countries each agreed to assume lead coordination responsibility for assistance to a single area of security-related Afghan administration: the United States for the army, Germany for the police, Italy for the judiciary, the United Kingdom for counternarcotics, and Japan for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of militias.

Afghanistan Compact and UNAMA

The Afghanistan Compact, a formal statement of commitment by the Afghan government and the international community, finalized in January 2006, shifted responsibility from lead nations to Afghanistan itself, with international support. The premise was a shared Afghan and international vision of Afghanistan’s future, including the commitment of the international community to “provide resources and support” to realize that vision. The Compact established three broad pillars of activity for future efforts—security; governance, the rule of law and human rights; and economic and social development. In order to “ensure overall strategic coordination of the implementation of the Compact,” the document established the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) process, co-chaired by an Afghan government representative and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), who leads the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).⁷⁸

UNAMA was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1401 (2002) on March 28, 2002. The mandate is renewed annually. The current mandate emphasizes UNAMA’s lead coordination for civilian assistance efforts; it states that UNAMA and the SRSG “will continue to lead the international civilian efforts,” and that as JCMB co-chair, will promote “...more coherent support by the international community to the Afghan government’s development and governance priorities.” Concerning military efforts, the mandate states that UNAMA and the SRSG will “strengthen cooperation with ISAF and the NATO Senior Civilian Representative at all levels ... in order to improve civil-military coordination ... and to ensure coherence between the activities

⁷⁸ See *The Afghanistan Compact: Building on Success*, London Conference on Afghanistan, London, January 31-February 1, 2006, available at http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf.

of national and international security forces and of civilian actors in support of an Afghan-led development and stabilization process.”⁷⁹

In practice, UNAMA has sometimes faced criticism for its inability to provide comprehensive coordination of all international community efforts in non-security areas, from prioritization to synchronized execution.⁸⁰

Kabul Process

Many practitioners and observers agree that those best placed to coordinate international community efforts—to firmly establish a single set of priorities—are the Afghans themselves. At his second presidential inauguration, President Karzai announced, “... we are seeking a new cooperation framework with the international community. This cooperation will be based on Afghan ownership.... Afghans will have the central role in prioritizing, designing and implementing development projects.”⁸¹ The new “Kabul Process”—deliberately borrowing its name from the earlier “Bonn Process”—is considered to date from that inauguration.⁸²

The basic premise of the Kabul Process, as President Karzai stated in his speech at the January 2010 London Conference, is “Afghan leadership, Afghan ownership.”⁸³ As the London Conference Communiqué confirmed, the Process is intended to include stronger Afghan leadership aimed at securing, stabilizing and developing the country, drawing more heavily on Afghan institutions and resources to meet the needs of the people.⁸⁴

The complement to the updated Afghan role was a redefined role for the international community, stressing “partnership” and “support.” The Communiqué of the July 2010 Kabul Conference described the two roles this way:

To achieve success in Afghanistan, the partnership between the Afghan Government and the international community should be based on the leadership and ownership of the Afghan Government, underpinned by its unique and irreplaceable knowledge of its own culture and people. This partnership should include coherent support by the international community, lending its resources and technical knowledge to the implementation of Afghan-defined programmes.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ See S/RES/1917 (2010), March 22, 2010, which extended the mandate of UNAMA for one year.

⁸⁰ Communications from ISAF officials, international diplomats based in Kabul, 2008, 2009, 2010.

⁸¹ President Hamid Karzai, Inaugural Speech (unofficial translation), November 19, 2009.

⁸² Communications from Karzai advisor, Dr. Ashraf Ghani, 2009, 2010.

⁸³ Statement by His Excellency Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, London International Conference on Afghanistan, January 28, 2010. Karzai began his London remarks by noting, “This conference offers us the opportunity to discuss the way forward toward an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned initiative that ensures peace and stability in Afghanistan and its surroundings.”

⁸⁴ London Conference Communiqué, “Afghan Leadership, Regional Cooperation, International Partnership”, January 28, 2010.

⁸⁵ Kabul Conference Communiqué, Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan, July 20, 2010.

NATO

NATO plays a substantial role in Afghanistan by providing the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and through the political role of the NATO Secretary-General and his personal representative in Afghanistan, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative.

ISAF Creation and Legal Basis for Presence

ISAF itself had been established in the wake of the Bonn Conference in December 2001, to help provide security to support the fledgling new Afghan regime. The legal basis for the ISAF presence in Afghanistan was a United Nations mandate, under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. A UN Security Council Resolution authorized the establishment of ISAF to “assist...in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas.”⁸⁶ That mandate was based on the specific appeal for such a force in the December 2001 Bonn Agreement.⁸⁷ The United Kingdom agreed to lead the force initially, and then it was led by a series of lead nations until mid-2003.⁸⁸ In January 2002, the Interim Authority of Afghanistan signed a Military Technical Agreement with the newly formed ISAF.

NATO assumed responsibility for the ISAF mission on August 9, 2003. ISAF represents NATO’s first significant out-of-area deployment, and it is viewed by many observers as a key test for the Alliance—a measure of both its current capabilities and its possible future relevance. On September 12, 2001, in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, NATO had, for the first time, invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which confirms the commitment of the allies to collective self-defense in the event of armed attack on any party to the treaty.⁸⁹ That action helped clear the way for future NATO operations in Afghanistan.

In October 2003, the UN Security Council authorized an expansion of the ISAF mandate to include supporting the Afghan government in maintaining security outside Kabul and its environs, and providing security to support the accomplishment of other objectives outlined in the Bonn Agreement.⁹⁰ The current UN mandate extends the authorization of ISAF for a period of 12 months beyond October 13, 2010.⁹¹

ISAF Mandate

ISAF’s current mission statement states:

⁸⁶ S/RES/1386 (2001), December 20, 2001.

⁸⁷ See Annex I, “International Security Force,” *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*, Bonn, Germany, December 5, 2001, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.af/Documents/ImportantDoc/The%20Bonn%20Agreement.pdf>. The Agreement states: “This force will assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas. Such a force could, as appropriate, be progressively expanded to other urban centers and areas.”

⁸⁸ The UK was followed by Turkey, and then Germany, see S/RES/1413 (2002), May 23, 2002, and S/RES/1444 (2002), November 27, 2002.

⁸⁹ See Article 5, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, signed April 4, 1949, Washington, DC, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/txt/treaty.htm>.

⁹⁰ S/RES/1510 (2003), October 13, 2003.

⁹¹ UNSCR 1943 (2010), October 13, 2010.

In support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ISAF conducts operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.⁹²

ISAF Geographic Expansion through Stages

ISAF, initially mandated to support Afghan efforts to secure Kabul and its immediate environs, expanded its geographical scope in four stages. During Stage 1, completed on October 1, 2004, ISAF expanded to the north of Kabul, assuming responsibility for a German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and establishing new PRTs. In Stage 2, completed in September 2005, ISAF expanded to the west. In Stage 3, completed on July 31, 2006, ISAF assumed responsibility for southern Afghanistan. In Stage 4, completed on October 5, 2006, ISAF assumed control of U.S.-led forces in eastern Afghanistan, making ISAF's responsibility to support security contiguous and complete throughout the country.⁹³

ISAF Organization

ISAF is led by a four-star combined headquarters, based in Kabul and headed by U.S. Army General David Petraeus. NATO's North Atlantic Council provides political direction for the mission. NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE), based in Mons, Belgium, and led by Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), U.S. Navy Admiral James Stavridis, provides strategic command and control. NATO's Joint Force Command Headquarters, which is based in Brunssum, The Netherlands, and reports to SHAPE, provides "overall operational control," including many administrative responsibilities. ISAF itself, which reports to SHAPE through Joint Forces Command-Brunssum, exercises "in-theater operational command." This arrangement, including two levels of operational headquarters, is somewhat unusual.

ISAF Joint Command (IJC)

One of the major conclusions of GEN McChrystal's 2009 *Initial Assessment* was that both unity of command within ISAF, and unity of effort throughout the international community in Afghanistan, needed to be improved. One major step in that direction was the creation, in October 2009, of the ISAF Joint Command (IJC), a three-star-led operational-level headquarters that falls under ISAF itself. The rationale for creating the IJC was that doing so would allow the ISAF four-star headquarters to look "up and out"—that is, to focus on strategic-level concerns, including partnership with senior Afghan leaders, relationships with neighboring states including Pakistan, civil-military coordination at the national level, and communications with troop-contributing national capitals and NATO headquarters. The IJC, meanwhile, would look "down and in"—it would be able to lead day-to-day operations throughout the country, while focusing on partnerships with Afghan and international counterparts.⁹⁴

The IJC has been led since its inception by Lieutenant General David Rodriguez, U.S. Army.

⁹² Available at ISAF website, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html>.

⁹³ See "History" on the ISAF website, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/history.html>.

⁹⁴ Communications from ISAF and IJC officials, 2009.

The current IJC mandate states:

In full partnership, the combined team of Afghan National Security Forces, ISAF Joint Command and relevant organizations conducts population-centric comprehensive operations to neutralize the insurgency in specified areas, and supports improved governance and development in order to protect the Afghan people and provide a secure environment for sustainable peace.⁹⁵

NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A)

In November 2009, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), was established in order to strengthen NATO's assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). NTM-A, like the IJC, reports to ISAF. It has been led since its inception by Lieutenant General William Caldwell, U.S. Army, who is dual-hatted as the Commanding General of the U.S. organization, the Combined Security Transition Command- Afghanistan (CSTC-A).

The NTM-A mission statement says:

NTM-A/CSTC-A, in coordination with NATO nations and partners, international organizations, donors and non-governmental organizations, supports the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in generating and sustaining the ANSF, develops leaders, and establishes enduring institutional capacity to enable accountable, Afghan-led security.⁹⁶

Regional Commands

In Afghanistan, ISAF oversees six contiguous Regional Commands (RC), most led by a two-star General Officer: RC-Capital, led by Turkey; RC-East, based at Bagram Air Field, led by a U.S. Army Division headquarters; RC-South, based in Kandahar province, also led by a U.S. Army Division headquarters; RC-Southwest, based in Helmand province, led by a U.S. Marine Expeditionary Force-forward; RC-West, based in Herat province, led by Italy; and RC-North, based in Balkh province, led by Germany. Troop contingents from other Allies, and from some non-NATO partners, serve under these Regional Commands.

ISAF Troop Contributors

As of February 3, 2011, ISAF included approximately 132,000 troops from 48 countries, including NATO Allies and non-NATO partners.⁹⁷ From the outset, NATO has struggled to secure sufficient troop contributions, with the appropriate capabilities, for ISAF. One consideration for potential troop contributors is cost—NATO's long-standing practice, "costs lie where they fall," typically means that countries pay their own costs when they contribute troops to a mission such as Afghanistan. Another consideration is the need for domestic political support.

⁹⁵ Available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/subordinate-commands/isaf-joint-command/index.php>.

⁹⁶ Available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/subordinate-commands/nato-training-mission-afghanistan/index.php>.

⁹⁷ International Security Assistance Force "Placemat" dated February 3, 2011, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/3%20Feb%202011%20Placemat-REVISED.pdf>.

National Caveats

From the outset, ISAF operations have been constrained by “national caveats”—restrictions that individual troop-contributing countries impose on their own forces’ activities. These restrictions are classified. According to the Department of Defense, as of April 2010, 27 ISAF troop contributors had placed caveats of some kind on their contingents; of those caveats, 20 imposed limitations on operating outside of originally assigned geographic locations.⁹⁸

Caveats tend to be informed by domestic political constraints—a government may consider, for example, that only by limiting its troops’ activities, and hedging against taking casualties, can it guard against strong popular domestic opposition to its troop contribution. As a rule, troop-contributing countries state their caveats explicitly; but additional constraints may surface when unanticipated requirements arise and contingents seek additional guidance from their capitals.

National caveats tend to frustrate commanders on the ground because they inhibit commanders’ freedom to apportion forces across the battlespace—to move and utilize forces freely. With caveats, the “whole” of the international force, as some observers have suggested, is less than the sum of its parts. Even more damaging, ISAF officials note, is the impact caveats can have on ISAF’s relationship with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) partners. For example, ISAF advisory teams that are unable to accompany ANSF counterparts on offensive operations quickly lose both the Afghans’ respect, and their own ability to shape and mentor the Afghan forces. Afghan Minister of Defense Abdul Rahim Wardak stated that ISAF training teams “don’t have the same quality” as their U.S. counterparts.⁹⁹ U.S. senior military officials in Afghanistan have noted that the ANSF appreciate their U.S. counterparts because “we drink from the same canteen.”¹⁰⁰ The U.S. government has consistently urged ISAF troop contributors to drop or ease their national caveats, with some success.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

Provincial Reconstructions Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan grew out of a U.S. military initiative in late 2002. In general, PRTs help Afghan provincial governments develop the capacity and capabilities to govern, provide security, ensure the rule of law, promote development, and meet the needs of the population.¹⁰¹ As ISAF’s area of responsibility expanded geographically, it assumed responsibility for PRTs in each new area. As of early 2011, ISAF maintains PRTs in 28 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, including two new contributions provided within the past year: the South Korean-led PRT in Parwan province, and the Turkish-led PRT in Jowzjan.¹⁰²

PRTs vary greatly in size, composition, and focus. The Swedish-led PRT based in Balkh province, for example, is primarily a Swedish military unit, augmented by a small handful of U.S. and

⁹⁸ See Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010.

⁹⁹ Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹⁰⁰ General David McKiernan and other U.S. officials, Interviews, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008. One additional consequence of national caveats is a tendency for U.S. troops in Afghanistan to regard ISAF with a degree of humorous skepticism—“ISAF,” the line goes, stands for “I Stop At Four,” or alternatively, “I Saw Americans Fighting.”

¹⁰¹ See “Fact Sheet: Making Afghanistan More Secure with Economic and Reconstruction Assistance,” White House, September 26, 2008, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/09/20080926-16.html>.

¹⁰² International Security Assistance Force “Placemat” dated February 3, 2011, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/3%20Feb%202011%20Placemat-REVISED.pdf>.

Finnish civilian experts, which has conducted various training and partnering activities with Afghan security forces. It is based in the capital city of Balkh, Mazar-e Sharif, separate from the headquarters of ISAF's German-led Regional Command-North. In contrast, the two Turkish-led PRTs, based in Wardak and Jowzjan provinces, are civilian organizations led by diplomats from Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which focus primarily on relationships with provincial political leadership and visible reconstruction projects—some of which they have painted bright red to match the color of the Turkish flag. Perhaps the largest PRT is the British-led team based in Helmand province, where the UK has long had a significant civilian and military presence. The PRT is led by a UK senior civilian and includes a large staff from multiple UK agencies, as well as some U.S. government civilian personnel. It is co-located with the Helmand-based UK military contingent, to facilitate integration of effort. The PRT in Uruzgan province, also in Regional Command-South, is the only one without a single national lead. After the drawdown of Dutch forces from Uruzgan, an agreement was reached to re-organize that PRT under the ISAF flag, with contributions from the Netherlands, the United States, and Australia.

U.S.-led PRTs have undergone substantial evolution in the last several years. As originally created, they were primarily military organizations, led by either an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel or a Navy Commander, and reporting to the nearest U.S. battlespace owner. They typically included between 80 and 120 total personnel, including Civil Affairs troops and support staff. Each PRT usually featured one representative each from the Department of State, the Agency for International Development (AID), and the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Today, each U.S. PRT has a U.S. government civilian lead, as well as a military PRT commander, and the civilian staffs have been significantly augmented. U.S. government civilians also serve on the staffs of non-U.S.-led PRTs throughout the country.

Practitioners and observers variously evaluate the successes of PRTs to date. Some argue that while PRTs have carried out useful work, they have not been resourced sufficiently to meet requirements. This may be particularly true for some Allies, for example Lithuania, that have fewer resources available in general for international assistance efforts. Others, including senior Afghan officials, have argued that PRTs do not coordinate their efforts sufficiently with Afghan authorities. In November 2008, during a visit to Kabul by a U.N. Security Council delegation, President Karzai claimed that PRTs were setting up “parallel governments” in the countryside, a claim he subsequently repeated.¹⁰³ In February 2011, at the Munich Security Conference, President Karzai called for the speedy dismantling of the PRTs, on the grounds that they serve as an impediment to the extension of Afghan authority.¹⁰⁴ Other Afghan officials have reportedly expressed that international resources channeled through PRTs are frequently “lost” amidst multiple layers of contractors and subcontractors before they reach the Afghan people.¹⁰⁵

NATO Senior Civilian Representative

The NATO Alliance is directly represented in Kabul by a Senior Civilian Representative (SCR), who serves as the personal representative of the NATO Secretary-General. The NATO SCR has no formal relationship with the ISAF Commander or headquarters, other than coordination. In

¹⁰³ Associated Press, “Afghan President Complains U.S., NATO Aren’t Succeeding,” Foxnews.com, November 26, 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Judy Dempsey, “Karzai Seeks End to NATO Reconstruction Teams,” *The New York Times*, February 6, 2011.

¹⁰⁵ ISAF officials, and Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interviews, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008, 2009.

past years, the NATO SCR focused primarily on Afghan political developments and on reporting up to NATO's political leadership.

That dynamic changed with the appointment, in February 2010, of a new NATO SCR, Ambassador Mark Sedwill, who had served formerly as the UK Ambassador to Afghanistan. While the formal terms of reference for the job were not changed, with NATO, UK, and U.S. encouragement, Ambassador Sedwill and then-ISAF Commander GEN McChrystal forged a much closer partnership than had pertained in the past. The two took important briefings together, held some key meetings with senior Afghan officials together, and conducted some travel around the country together. They also coordinated their presentations for their respective NATO chains of command. Together, the two fostered more effective integration of effort among key international actors—UNAMA, the European Union, and a handful of key Embassies—by bringing together the leaders of these organizations frequently in a small group format.¹⁰⁶

In February 2011, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced the decision to appoint Ambassador Simon Gass, currently serving as the UK Ambassador to Iran, to succeed Ambassador Sedwill as NATO SCR in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷

U.S. Presence

Over the past several years, with the surge of both military forces and civilian personnel, the U.S. government footprint on the ground in Afghanistan has grown substantially. At the same time, both military and civilian command and control arrangements, and modalities for civil-military coordination, have also changed significantly.

U.S. Forces

As the NATO ISAF mission in Afghanistan grew and changed, the unilateral U.S. footprint adapted accordingly. During major combat operations in 2001, the U.S. military established a special operations forces (SOF) presence in Afghanistan, reporting directly to U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM). By early 2002, some U.S. conventional forces, including a two-star U.S. Army Division Headquarters, had flowed into Afghanistan, but the footprint remained light—only one brigade combat team (BCT)—until early 2007.

In October 2003, a U.S.-led three-star Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) was established in Kabul. CFC-A oversaw two U.S.-led two-star commands that also included coalition partners—a training command for the ANSF; and a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) built around a U.S. Army Division headquarters, leading conventional forces in eastern Afghanistan. CFC-A served until ISAF assumed security responsibility for all of Afghanistan, and was then deactivated, in February 2007. Following the deactivation of CFC-A, its subordinate ANSF training command, the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), began reporting directly to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), and its subordinate CJTF assumed a dual U.S./NATO reporting chain, to CENTCOM for U.S. issues and to ISAF in its NATO capacity as Regional Command-East.

¹⁰⁶ Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, UK Embassy, and UNAMA officials, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ See <http://www.acus.org/natosource/nato-appoints-new-senior-civilian-representative-afghanistan>.

In October 2008, the Department of Defense activated United States Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), a new four-star headquarters designed to streamline command and control for U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan. The ISAF Commanding General, then GEN McKiernan, was dual-hatted as the USFOR-A Commanding General. Today, the USFOR-A Commanding General has “operational control” of U.S. conventional forces operating at ISAF’s Regional Commands, of the U.S. training mission CSTC-A, and of some U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF); he has a “tactical control” relationship with some other U.S. SOF.

As the head of ISAF, General Petraeus reports up the NATO chain of command to SACEUR Admiral James Stavridis; as the head of USFOR-A, he reports to the Commanding General of CENTCOM, General James Mattis.

U.S. Troop Numbers

According to the Joint Staff, as of January 1, 2011, there were 96,700 U.S. military personnel serving in Afghanistan. Of those, 78,400 were assigned to ISAF, while the rest were serving under the U.S. flag.¹⁰⁸ Major U.S.-provided headquarters units include the 101st Airborne Division, serving as the nucleus of Regional Command-East; the 10th Mountain Division, serving as the nucleus of Regional Command-South; and I Marine Expeditionary Force-Forward, serving as the nucleus of Regional Command-Southwest.¹⁰⁹

U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan have grown significantly over time. In December 2006, U.S. forces included only one Brigade Combat Team. In early 2007, an additional BCT was added, by extending the tour of the 3rd BCT, 10th Mountain Division (3/10) by 120 days, flowing in its originally scheduled replacement, 4th BCT, 82nd Airborne Division, on schedule, and later replacing 3/10 with the 173rd Airborne BCT.¹¹⁰ In January 2008, the Department of Defense announced that President Bush had approved an “extraordinary, one-time” deployment of 3,200 additional Marines to Afghanistan.¹¹¹ Those forces did redeploy in November 2008, but were replaced by a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), including 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, plus additional logistics and air support.

It was not until 2009 that the U.S. footprint began to grow substantially, including a Combat Aviation Brigade that had been approved by the Bush Administration in December 2008; approximately 17,000 troops approved by President Obama in February 2009; and some 30,000 further troops approved as a result of the Obama Administration’s strategic assessment that fall.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Joint Staff, “Boots on the Ground” Information Paper, February 8, 2011. The Joint Staff noted: “The overlap of transitioning force, short-duration temporary duty personnel, U.S. forces assigned to DoD combat support agencies, and other forces not operationally assigned and therefore unavailable to the Commanding General are excluded.” ISAF noted that as of February 3, 2011, there were 90,000 U.S. personnel serving in ISAF; the difference reflects not a substantial increase in U.S. forces during January 2011, but rather the different personnel accountability systems used by ISAF and DoD. See International Security Assistance Force “Placemat” dated February 3, 2011, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/3%20Feb%202011%20Placemat-REVISED.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ For a full description of U.S. and ISAF major units currently deployed, see Wesley Morgan, “Afghanistan Order of Battle,” Institute for the Study of War, February 2011, available at http://www.understandingwar.org/files/AfghanistanOrbat_Feb11.pdf.

¹¹⁰ See Matthew Cox, “10th Mountain Brigade Extended in Afghanistan,” *Army Times*, January 25, 2007.

¹¹¹ See Ann Scott Tyson, “3,200 Marines to Deploy to Afghanistan in Spring,” *Washington Post*, January 16, 2008.

¹¹² See Department of Defense, “DoD Announces Afghanistan Force Deployment,” December 22, 2008, available at <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12406>; Department of Defense, “DoD Announces Afghanistan (continued...)”

Legal Basis for U.S. Force Presence

Two separate sets of arrangements are in place, for ISAF and for U.S. forces deployed under U.S. command, to provide a legal basis for the presence of those forces in Afghanistan.

In 2002 and 2003, U.S. Embassy Kabul and the Afghan Ministry for Foreign Affairs exchanged diplomatic notes, which together constituted a formal agreement. The notes, which remain in force, confirmed that military and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense shall be accorded a status equivalent to that of Embassy administrative and technical staff under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The notes also addressed freedom of movement, licenses, the wearing of uniforms, the use of vehicles, exemption from taxation, and imports and exports. They confirmed U.S. criminal jurisdiction over U.S. personnel.¹¹³

Some of the basic provisions of that exchange of notes were reconfirmed by a *Joint Declaration* signed by President Karzai and President Bush, in May 2005, in which the two countries committed themselves to a strategic partnership with the goal of “strengthen[ing] U.S.-Afghan ties to help ensure Afghanistan’s long-term security, democracy and prosperity.” The *Declaration* confirmed the bilateral intent to work together closely on a range of activities including, in the security sector: training the Afghan National Security Forces, security sector reform, counterterrorism operations, counternarcotics programs, intelligence-sharing, border security, and strengthening ties with NATO. The *Declaration* included the specific, practical commitment that U.S. military forces operating in Afghanistan would continue to have access to Bagram Air Base “and facilities at other locations as may be mutually determined,” and that U.S. and coalition forces would continue to enjoy freedom of action to conduct military operations “based on consultations and pre-agreed procedures.”¹¹⁴

Over time, the Afghan leadership has expressed interest in making sure that ISAF- and U.S.-led forces coordinate their operations with the ANSF and with each other. For example, the 2006 Afghanistan Compact, the basic framework for international community engagement in Afghanistan in all sectors, stated that all U.S. “counter-terrorism operations will be conducted in close coordination with the Afghan government and ISAF.”¹¹⁵

In August 2008, President Karzai called for a review of the presence of all foreign forces in Afghanistan and the conclusion of formal status of forces agreements.¹¹⁶ He issued the call during

(...continued)

Force Deployment,” February 17, 2009, available at <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12493>; and President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, West Point, New York, December 1, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

¹¹³ See “Diplomatic Note No.202,” Embassy of the United States of America, Kabul, Afghanistan, September 26, 2002; “Note, Document No.791,” Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fifth Political Department, December 12, 2002; and “Note, Document No.93,” Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, American and Canada Political Affairs Department, May 28, 2003. See also Karen DeYoung, “Only a Two-Page ‘Note’ Governs U.S. Military in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, August 28, 2008.

¹¹⁴ See Joint Declaration of the United States-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership, May 23, 2005, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050523-2.html>.

¹¹⁵ *The Afghanistan Compact: Building on Success*, London Conference on Afghanistan, London, UK, February 1, 2006, available at http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf.

¹¹⁶ See Karen DeYoung, “Only a Two-Page ‘Note’ Governs U.S. Military in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, August 28, 2008.

the heated U.S.-Iraqi negotiation process aimed at achieving a status of forces-like agreement, and just after U.S. airstrikes in Azizabad, Afghanistan, had apparently produced a number of civilian casualties. In January 2009, GIRoA reportedly sent a proposed draft agreement to NATO, which outlined terms and conditions for the presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan.¹¹⁷ Officials have suggested that U.S.-Afghan talks designed to update the bilateral strategic partnership, scheduled for 2011, may consider revising the legal basis for the presence of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.¹¹⁸

U.S. Government Civilians

In recent years, the U.S. government civilian presence in Afghanistan has grown substantially in numbers of personnel, numbers of participating U.S. government agencies, and the reach of its footprint on the ground. In addition, new measures have been introduced to better organize the U.S. government effort internally. Of course, U.S. civil-military efforts do not take place in a vacuum—they are linked in most locations and at most levels with efforts by Afghan civilian and security officials, and with efforts by Allies and partners.

Civilian “Surge”

Many practitioners and observers had long suggested that the capacity-building challenges in Afghanistan required additional international civilian expertise, as well as the effective integration of such expertise with military efforts.

In 2008, ISAF commanders argued that a stronger commitment to build responsive capacity was required because it was governance, more than security or development, that was lagging in Afghanistan. Then-RC-East Commanding General, Major General Schloesser, argued, “We need an interagency surge!”¹¹⁹ Senior officials from other Allied countries within ISAF echoed this argument—in November 2008, then-RC-North Commanding General, German Major General Weigt, argued that he needed “civilian advisory teams,” as analogues to the military training teams working with Afghan forces. “The main problem for me,” he stated, “is not security, but deficits in governance.”¹²⁰ Outside experts too stressed the need for additional civilian expertise. In December 2008, Sarah Chayes wrote that the problem of governance in Afghanistan was particularly acute, and she argued, “Western governments should send experienced former mayors, district commissioners and water and health department officials to mentor Afghans in those roles.”¹²¹

In late 2008, U.S. Embassy Kabul outlined a proposal for a “civilian surge” to support provincial- and district-level governance in Afghanistan. Spearheaded by then-Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP), Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the initiative, also known as the “civilian uplift”, grew quickly. During 2009, the number of U.S. civilian personnel under Chief of Mission authority in Afghanistan increased from about 300 to nearly 1,000. By early

¹¹⁷ See Associated Press, “Afghanistan Seeks More Control of NATO Troops,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 2009.

¹¹⁸ Communications from Administration officials, 2010, 2011.

¹¹⁹ MG Jeffrey Schloesser, Interview, Bagram, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹²⁰ MG Weigt, Interview, Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹²¹ Sarah Chayes, “Clean up the Afghan Government, and the Taliban will Fade Away,” *Washington Post*, December 14, 2008.

2011, according to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, there were more than 1,100 civilian experts from nine federal agencies serving in Afghanistan.¹²²

The additional civilians have come from multiple U.S. government agencies—the Department of State, the Agency for International Development (AID), and the Department of Agriculture (USDA), which have long provided some personnel to serve at PRTs, but also the Departments of Treasury, Justice, Homeland Security and others. Some are reinforcing the staff of U.S. Embassy Kabul, including serving in “growth” areas such as rule of law; others are deploying to the field to serve at Regional Commands, at PRTs, or close to local communities at District Support Teams (DSTs).

U.S. civilian agencies have faced significant challenges in meeting the full demand for civilian expertise, a pressure that reportedly continued in early 2011. Unlike the military, most civilian agency personnel are not readily deployable—their full-time jobs are not, effectively, preparation for deployment, but rather full-time concerns in their own right; and civilian agencies do not typically maintain a personnel “float” that can easily backfill positions for others who are deploying.

Agencies have explored a variety of solutions to meet the requirement in Afghanistan. USDA, for example, has made deployment opportunities available not only to members of its Foreign Agricultural Service, whose members do regularly serve overseas, but also to staff of USDA as a whole. Both State and AID rely very heavily on temporary hires, including State’s “3161” system of contracting, and AID’s “Foreign Service Limited” appointments.¹²³

Perhaps not surprisingly, the results are a mixed bag. Ideally, U.S. government civilians would bring to their deployments three forms of expertise: technical expertise in their fields; familiarity with the programs and culture of their home organization; and knowledge of Afghanistan. While technical expertise is the norm, new hires are unlikely to be familiar with their new organization, and most new and old hires have little or no prior experience in Afghanistan.¹²⁴ Moreover, looking ahead, much of the accumulated Afghanistan experience of temporary hires is likely to be lost, because there are few if any ready mechanisms for bringing temporary hires on board as permanent agency staff.

Senior Civilian Representatives

In 2009, a significant change was introduced by the creation of U.S. “Senior Civilian Representative” (SCR) positions and a streamlined chain of command for all U.S. civilians working under Chief of Mission authority—that is, for the U.S. Ambassador in Kabul.¹²⁵ At each level—Regional Command, Brigade, provincial, and district—one of the U.S. civilians, usually the highest in seniority regardless of home agency, is designated the SCR. All other U.S. civilians on that team or in that command report to the SCR. The SCR, in turn, is responsible for reporting

¹²² Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, “Remarks at the Launch of the Asia Society’s Series of Richard C. Holbrooke Memorial Addresses,” Asia Society, New York, NY, February 18, 2011, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/02/156815.htm>.

¹²³ Communications from State, AID, USDA officials, 2009, 2010.

¹²⁴ Communications from State, AID officials, 2009, 2010, 2011.

¹²⁵ The U.S. and NATO both use the term “Senior Civilian Representative” but their respective personnel serving in SCR posts have no formal relationship to one another.

up to the next higher level. The change was designed to “raise the profile” of the civilian effort, to put civilian efforts on par with those of the military, and to ensure better unity of effort among civilian agencies.¹²⁶

The structure marks a change from the familiar past role of State Department Political Advisors (POLADs), based at State’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. POLADs typically played an advisory role to the military commander—effectively serving as the commander’s (senior) staff rather than counterpart. During the war in Iraq, the State Department found it challenging to meet the requests of military commanders at all levels for POLADs; the Department of Defense obliged by hiring civilians with political-military backgrounds to serve in analogous advisory capacities.¹²⁷

The SCR structure has reportedly created some tensions among U.S. civilian agencies, as many personnel in “field” position continue to reach back directly to their home organizations in Kabul or back in Washington in addition to utilizing the SCR chain. That dynamic is not surprising—field personnel, particularly if they are new to their home organizations, may need ongoing familiarization with agency programs; they may want to remain in direct contact with a view to future assignments; and they may seek support if and when disagreements about policy or approaches arise within their inter-agency team on the ground.¹²⁸

U.S. Civil-Military Integration

Some observers have suggested that Afghanistan might be a useful test case for an integrated, balanced application of all instruments of U.S. national power.¹²⁹ Practice in Afghanistan to date highlights some remarkable innovations in civil-military integration but also the persistence of stubbornly distinct cultures that do not necessarily give each other the benefit of the doubt. Some military practitioners in Afghanistan still tend to regard civilian efforts as “too slow,” while some civilian practitioners still tend to regard with concern a perceived military tendency to “charge ahead.”¹³⁰

Civil-Military Integration Versus Division of Labor

The significantly larger U.S. military and civilian presence in Afghanistan, together with more co-location of U.S. civilian and military officials working in a given location, has, practitioners suggest, underscored the need for both strong integration and clear division of labor.¹³¹

On the ground, civilian and military practitioners have frequently crafted innovative arrangements for better integrating their efforts. One illustration of arrangements that foster greater integration

¹²⁶ Communications from ISAF and U.S. Embassy Kabul officials, 2009, 2010.

¹²⁷ The author was one of those DoD Political Advisors during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

¹²⁸ Communications from State, AID, USDA field personnel, 2009, 2010.

¹²⁹ See for example “Afghanistan: Winning the War. Problems, Solutions, and Critical Decisions for the Next Administration,” Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, Washington DC, December 4, 2008, panel discussion video transcript available at http://www.defenddemocracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11784099&Itemid=385.

¹³⁰ Communications from civilian and military officials, 2009, 2010, 2011.

¹³¹ Communications from ISAF and U.S. Embassy officials, 2009, 2010.

is the “Board of Directors” concept created and practiced, through several rotations, by the U.S. Army Brigade and its civilian counterparts responsible for efforts in Paktia, Paktika and Khowst provinces (“P2K”). In that arrangement, the civilian and military leaders collectively take briefs from their civilian and military subordinates on the full range of topics—security, governance, and development. They collectively brief their higher headquarters—the Commander of Regional Command-East and his SCR counterpart. And senior leaders of the Board travel together throughout their area of responsibility. Board members have indicated that as a rule, the Brigade Commander makes decisions in the security arena; civilian officials make decisions in the arenas of governance and development; and group consultation on the full spectrum of issues is common and facilitated by the scheduled of shared briefings.¹³²

In some cases, the strongly enhanced civilian presence and the growth of SCR-led civilian teams as counterparts to military commands has had a different impact, fostering a sharp division of labor between the two. Some military staffs have been eager to hand off responsibilities in non-security arenas to civilians—an “over to you” approach. Meanwhile, some civilian teams have been eager to assume undisputed leadership of those efforts.¹³³ Too strong an emphasis on division of labor can leave gaps in understanding and approach between military and civilian officials, and can draw the military’s focus away from their critical supporting roles in governance and development activities.

Structure for Integration and Decision-Making

Several years ago, the State Department’s Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) deployed a handful of civilian planners to Afghanistan to help the U.S. Embassy and U.S. military forces craft more effective modalities for cooperation. Their efforts helped to establish a senior-level civil-military forum, the Executive Working Group (EWG), intended to serve as a civil-military decision-making body with the authority to issue guidance. Its initial stated mission was to “unify U.S. Government efforts in Afghanistan through coordinated planning and execution” across four lines of operation—security, governance, development, and information. Original members of the U.S.-only forum included senior leaders from the U.S. Embassy, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, and some ISAF Regional Commands. The EWG was supported by a standing secretariat and planning body, the Integrated Civilian-Military Action Group (ICMAG), established in late 2008.

Today, the Executive Working Group continues to function, with participation expanded to include the leaders of additional staff sections from the U.S. Embassy and ISAF, as well as Senior Civilian Representatives from the Regional Commands. The EWG is supported by a growing series of Working Groups focused on specific issues, such as borders; Working Group membership may now include non-U.S. personnel. The whole structure feeds up into a regularly convening forum of ISAF and Embassy senior leadership.

The architecture alone—designed and elaborated on the ground in Afghanistan—represented a significant step toward closer civil-military integration. In practice, while there have been few impediments to regularly convening the participants at each level, the system—not unlike the Washington-based National Security Council system—has not always generated decisions in a

¹³² Communications from civilian and military practitioners in P2K, 2008, 2009, 2010.

¹³³ Communications from civilian and military practitioners, 2009, 2010.

timely fashion. “Discussing” issues, some participants say, is more common than resolving them.¹³⁴

Civil-Military Planning

U.S. civil-military planning in Afghanistan has had several key jumpstarts in recent years. In 2008 and 2009, drawing on the planning resources of the ICMAG, and capitalizing on the more frequent interaction that the EWG process fostered, the U.S. Embassy and USFOR-A crafted the first civil-military campaign plan in Afghanistan. The *Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan* was published in August 2009, under the signatures of both U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and USFOR-A Commanding General GEN McChrystal.¹³⁵ The 40-page document laid out 11 “transformative effects”—areas for combined civil-military effort such as justice, governance, agriculture, and reintegration. The paper did not articulate a comprehensive strategic vision for Afghanistan itself, or prioritize or sequence the efforts it prescribed. Some practitioners stressed that the primary achievement of the strategy was further fostering the practice of civil-military planning.¹³⁶ In late 2010, efforts were reportedly underway to update the U.S. Civil-Military Campaign Plan in order to better synchronize it with the ISAF campaign plan, which was undergoing its usual annual update.¹³⁷

Meanwhile, the October 2009 stand-up of the ISAF Joint Command (IJC), NATO ISAF’s three-star operational-level headquarters, created a natural planning partner for Embassy officials focused on governance and development efforts at sub-national levels. The IJC extended an open invitation to U.S. Embassy officials—as well as to partners from other key Embassies and from UNAMA—to participate in planning efforts. In 2009 and throughout 2010, extensive planning for the “main effort” operations in Helmand province, and later in Kandahar province, as well as for refining civil-military support to key districts across Afghanistan, provided opportunities for collaboration. Over time, Embassy participation in these planning activities increased substantially. The critical challenge faced by the U.S. Embassy in participating fully in these activities was a lack of dedicated personnel. Those officials best able to speak authoritatively about plans in a particular sector were typically occupied working full-time on that set of issues, so while they were available for decision-making meetings, they were not typically available for full-time, long-term planning efforts. Civilian planners provided to the Embassy by S/CRS, serving in the Political-Military section, contributed substantially to these efforts.¹³⁸

The Campaign

The overall campaign broadly aimed at the stabilization of Afghanistan is multi-faceted in both participation and focus. The campaign is joint, combined, and civil-military, and includes governance, development and security efforts. It addresses conflict settlement as well as current counter-insurgency and stabilization efforts—including the transition process by which Afghans

¹³⁴ Communications from civilian and military participants, and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

¹³⁵ U.S. Embassy Kabul and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan, August 10, 2009.

¹³⁶ Communications from civilian and military practitioners, and participant observation, 2008, 2009.

¹³⁷ Communications from ISAF officials, 2010.

¹³⁸ Communications from ISAF and Embassy officials, 2009, 2010.

assume lead responsibility for security, and the twin processes of reintegration and reconciliation which may bring former insurgents at all levels back into peaceful Afghan society. In general, the campaign is Afghan-led, particularly in the sense of priority-setting.

Operation *Omid*

Operation *Omid* (“hope”) is the joint, combined, and civil-military operational-level operation designed to implement the campaign plan across Afghanistan over time. Its main points of emphasis draw on the major themes of GEN McChrystal’s 2009 *Initial Assessment*, which were later captured in the 2009 revision of the ISAF campaign plan: geographical prioritization across the theater, based on population centers, commerce centers, and trade routes; and full integration of security, governance, and development efforts in those prioritized locations.¹³⁹ Its most important contribution, according to IJC Commander LTG Rodriguez, was to “focus and synchronize efforts.”¹⁴⁰

Planning and Participation in Operation *Omid*

In 2009, during the months before the stand-up of the ISAF Joint Command (IJC), future IJC staff officers, directed by then-future IJC Commander LTG Rodriguez, began laying out operational-level plans to support the strategic-level ISAF campaign. From the start, they reached out to Afghan counterparts at the Afghan Ministries of Defense and Interior, fully engaging them in a combined planning effort—and helping “create” new Afghan planners when Afghan experience was lacking. As these efforts got underway, future IJC staff also reached out to the U.S. Embassy, and to several other key international civilian partners including the UK Embassy and UNAMA, to seek input and, as much as possible, full participation. The results of these early joint, combined and civil-military planning efforts was the first Operation *Omid* plan, signed by both Afghan and ISAF officials.

Over the next year, through a succession of operations in specific areas, the multi-faceted planning effort grew to include Afghan civilian as well as security ministry officials; Afghan civilian officials from the provincial and district levels; Afghan police and army commanders; and their respective civilian and military counterparts from the international community.

The Operation *Omid* plans underwent their first revision in late 2010.

Operation *Moshtarek*

The first major test of the broad Operation *Omid* plans was Operation *Moshtarek* (“together”). *Moshtarek* focused on the six central districts of Helmand province—the central Helmand River valley. Helmand, like Kandahar province next door, is heavily Pashtun-populated. Helmand long

¹³⁹ Communications from ISAF and IJC officials, and participant observation, 2009, 2010. See also General Stanley McChrystal, Commander’s Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140.

¹⁴⁰ See DoD News Briefing with LTG Rodriguez, February 1, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4764>; and Matthew Green, Interview with General David Petraeus, *Financial Times*, February 7, 2011.

served as a key “breadbasket” for the region, and as a significant source of poppy-growing and revenue-generation for the Taliban. The six districts were chosen due to their relatively dense population concentration, and their importance for commerce routes linking the province’s key agricultural areas to the center of commerce, the capital Lashkar Gah, and then on to Kandahar next door.¹⁴¹

Planning efforts encompassed all levels of government—Kabul-based Ministers from both civilian and security ministries; Governor Mangal of Helmand province; Afghan army and police regional commanders; and international counterparts. Plans were rehearsed using a series of combined, civil-military backbriefs.¹⁴²

Shaping operations for *Moshtarek* included targeted operations by Special Operations Forces, as well as significant governance activities including identifying Afghan officials to serve at the district level and fostering more inclusive district-level councils to help give local populations a stronger voice. President Karzai personally gave his approval for the launch of “clearing” operations, carried out by combined Afghan, U.S. and UK forces. Officials noted that the operation was quickly successful in clearing the area of Taliban fighters; the process of establishing governance—forming local citizens’ councils and filling district-level government positions—proceeded more slowly.¹⁴³

Operation *Hamkari*

The second large-scale manifestation of Operation *Omid* was Operation *Hamkari* (“cooperation”) in Kandahar province next door, based on the same model of “shaping” key areas by engaging with local councils and identifying competent personnel to serve as government officials; “clearing” insurgent strongholds; and “holding” those areas with a combination of Afghan and international forces and emerging Afghan civilian leadership.¹⁴⁴

Kandahar province presented some greater challenges than had Helmand. It is the spiritual home of the Taliban, and Taliban leaders and fighters had long made use of safe havens in districts adjacent to Kandahar city, including Zhari, Panjwai, and parts of Arghandab. In contrast to the relatively strong and balanced political leadership by Governor Mangal in Helmand, political power in Kandahar was far more narrowly channeled through the hands of key powerbrokers including President Karzai’s half-brother Ahmed Wali Karzai, the Chairman of the Provincial Council. Beneficial or otherwise, his strong *de facto* authority reportedly was not exercised evenly, resulting in deeply unequal opportunities for political and economic participation. In the view of some practitioners, the imperative to temper any of his activities that did not benefit all the Afghan people clashed with the imperative to accomplish the mission.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, UK, and Afghan officials, and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

¹⁴² Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, UK, and Afghan officials, and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

¹⁴³ Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, UK, and Afghan officials, and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009 and 2010. Afghan officials initially expressed concerns about the use of the term “operation”, arguing that it narrowly connoted kinetic activities rather than broader stabilization activities including governance and development. English-speaking practitioners found it extraordinarily difficult to write and especially talk about an effort that had no associated noun (on the premise that *hamkari* is more of a descriptor).

¹⁴⁵ Communications from ISAF, U.S. officials, 2009, 2010.

Planning efforts for *Hamkari* were even more robust than for *Moshtarek*, including pre-briefs to President Karzai, and a joint, video-teleconferenced pre-brief to Presidents Karzai and Obama together. President Karzai personally conducted shaping activities—meeting with large and small gatherings of key community leaders in Kandahar to seek their support.

As of early 2011, ISAF officials credited the combined operation to date with significantly disrupting insurgent networks around Kandahar city, and with laying the foundations for future responsive governance through the establishment of an Afghan civilian government presence, including ministry representatives, at the district level. LTG Rodriguez noted that in January 2011, in Arghandab district just north of the city, a new district governor, a new police chief, and 16 government employees were working at the district center.¹⁴⁶

Winter Campaign and 2011 Operations

In early 2011, ISAF and its Afghan partners were conducting a “winter campaign”, designed to harden areas cleared of a Taliban presence by strengthening Afghan security force and civilian governance presence and activities, and by further fostering representative local councils that help the Afghan people hold their officials accountable. Officials expect that the spring fighting season will bring more concerted Taliban attempts to reassert influence and reclaim territory.

In early 2011, looking ahead at the rest of the year, ISAF and its Afghan partners planned to focus on expanding the “security bubbles” in Central Helmand and Kandahar, including connecting them with each other and extending them out to the border with Pakistan, to facilitate freedom of movement and trade. They also planned to expand the security bubble around Kabul city south into Wardak and Logar provinces, and east into Nangarhar province.¹⁴⁷

In eastern Afghanistan, in Paktia, Paktika and Khowst provinces, officials planned to focus on continuing to decimate the Haqqani network, challenging their freedom of movement across the border from Pakistan into the traditional Zadran tribe. In northern Afghanistan, plans included reducing the strength of a growing Taliban presence, particularly in Baghlan province. In western Afghanistan, the city of Herat, already home to a robust socio-economic life and little threatened by violence, was a good candidate, LTG Rodriguez observed, for early transition.¹⁴⁸

Timelines and Transition

In his December 2009 West Point speech, President Obama firmly established the “July 2011” marker, yet many practitioners and observers expressed some confusion about what changes were expected at that time, and what relationship “July 2011” was likely to have to the rest of the campaign. The development of debates and then activities concerning the process of “transition”—rooted in both President Karzai’s stated policy positions and long-standing NATO

¹⁴⁶ See DoD News Briefing with LTG Rodriguez, February 1, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4764>.

¹⁴⁷ See DoD News Briefing with LTG Rodriguez, February 1, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4764>; and Matthew Green, Interview with General David Petraeus, *Financial Times*, February 7, 2011.

¹⁴⁸ See DoD News Briefing with LTG Rodriguez, February 1, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4764>; and Matthew Green, Interview with General David Petraeus, *Financial Times*, February 7, 2011.

plans—has provided a broader context, extending out until the end of 2014, for the “July 2011” marker.

President Karzai’s Support for Transition

Under the rubric of further extending the exercise of Afghan sovereignty, President Karzai introduced the basic tenets of “transition” that now shape NATO and U.S. strategic thinking and planning. As part of his second inaugural address in November 2009, he stated that “within the next three years” Afghanistan would “lead and conduct military operations in the many insecure areas of the country.” He added that within five years, Afghan forces would “take the lead in ensuring security and stability across the country.”¹⁴⁹ President Karzai repeated these statements at the January 2010 London Conference in even more powerful language: “We will spare no effort and sacrifice to lead security of our country within the next five years all over Afghanistan.”¹⁵⁰

Elaboration and Approval of the Transition Concept

The term “transition” has roots in formal NATO planning documents. Over the course of the past two years, through combined Afghan and international efforts, the concept of transition has been refined significantly. “Transition” is the name of Phase IV of NATO’s operational plans for Afghanistan, during which lead security responsibility transitions from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Parts of Afghanistan that have not entered Phase IV remain in Phase III, “Stabilization.”

On October 23, 2009, NATO Defense Ministers, meeting in Bratislava, approved a Strategic Concept for Phase IV “Transition.” That step gave ISAF the go-ahead to work with Afghan partners to codify the process.

In the official Communiqué of the January 2010 London Conference on Afghanistan, conference participants supported the decision by NATO’s political governing body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), to develop, before the Kabul Conference scheduled to be held that summer, “a plan for phased transition to Afghan security lead province by province, including the conditions on which transition will be based.” Participants stressed their “shared commitment to create the conditions to allow for transition as rapidly as possible.” The London Conference Communiqué introduced a timeline: a “number of provinces” would transition to ANSF lead “by late 2010 or early 2011, with ISAF moving to a supporting role in those provinces.”¹⁵¹

In April 2010, at the informal meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Tallinn, Estonia, participants agreed on conditions that would need to be met before any given area could transition. As discussed in Tallinn, the term “transition” still referred to a change in security responsibilities, but the scope of decision-making criteria was explicitly broadened to include governance and development factors, as well as security-related considerations. The premise was

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ President Hamid Karzai, Opening Remarks, London Conference, January 28, 2010.

¹⁵¹ “Afghanistan: The London Conference, 28 January 2010, Communiqué, Afghan Leadership Regional Cooperation International Partnership,” paragraph 11, available at <http://centralcontent.fco.gov.uk/central-content/afghanistan-hmg/resources/pdf/conference/Communique-final>.

that a stable broader environment would be necessary to ensure durable security. The Tallinn meeting launched a series of follow-on consultations in Kabul among Afghan officials, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative, ISAF leaders, and representatives of key Allied troop-contributing nations. The talks focused on elaborating a concept paper for *Inteqal* (which means “transition” in both Dari and Pashto).¹⁵²

The July 2010 Kabul Conference confirmed several key outcomes of the *Inteqal* consultations. Participants endorsed the Afghan government’s broad plan for phased transition, including establishing a decision-making process led by the Afghan government and the NAC, and they confirmed the goal of announcing, by the end of 2010, that transition was “underway.”¹⁵³

At the NATO Lisbon Summit in November 2010, the transition “way forward” was formally announced. The Summit Declaration stated that the transition process was “on track to begin in early 2011.” Afghan forces would “be assuming full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan” by the end of 2014.¹⁵⁴

Transition Decisions

ISAF officials have stressed that several key principles will guide transition decision-making: each transition decision will be conditions-based; transition will signal the start of a progressive shift in the role of the international community from supporting to mentoring to enabling to sustaining; transition must be irreversible; and transition will be based on the capabilities of the civilian Afghan government as well as the ANSF. The concept was broadened to allow for the transition of districts and even institutions, in addition to provinces.¹⁵⁵

In Kabul, the Joint Afghan NATO *Inteqal* Board (JANIB) was tasked with conducting assessments and formulating recommendations, on a rolling basis, concerning the timelines for transitioning geographic areas and institutions. In February 2011, at the Munich Security Conference, President Karzai stated that he expected to announce the first tranche of provinces for transition on March 21, 2011.¹⁵⁶

Security Efforts

Security efforts including counter-terrorism, combined clearing operations, and growing the Afghan National Security Forces are widely regarded as critical to the success of the overall campaign. To the extent that differences of opinion emerge, among practitioners and observers who believe in general that a campaign should be carried out, those differences concern the relative importance of security versus other efforts, and the most appropriate timing and sequencing of security efforts and other elements of the campaign.

¹⁵² Information from ISAF and NATO personnel, April 2010.

¹⁵³ Kabul Conference Communiqué, Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan, July 20, 2010, paragraph 19, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.af/FINAL%20Kabul%20Conference%20%20%20Communiqué.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ NATO Lisbon Summit Declaration, November 20, 2010, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm?mode=pressrelease.

¹⁵⁵ Communications from ISAF officials, June–October 2010.

¹⁵⁶ “Karzai Insists on Security Transition by Spring,” TOLO News, February 9, 2011, available at <http://www.tolonews.com/en/goftman/1824-karzai-insists-on-security-transition-by-spring>.

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

Most would agree that growing sufficient capacity and capability in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is essential to the overall campaign, in order to support the process of transitioning lead responsibility for security to those Afghan forces. Decades of war, displacement, and mismanagement, followed by the ouster of the Taliban regime, left Afghanistan without organized, functioning security forces or equipment, so rebuilding the ANSF has been a challenge as well as a high priority of the post-Taliban international assistance effort.

The ANSF consists of the Afghan National Army (ANA), which falls under the Ministry of Defense; and the Afghan National Police (ANP), which falls under the Ministry of Interior. Afghanistan's third so-called security ministry is the National Directorate of Security (NDS), which is Afghanistan's intelligence agency.

The ANA consists primarily of ground forces. As of early 2011, the ANA had six ground forces Corps Headquarters—the 201st Corps near Kabul, the 203rd Corps in Gardez in the east, the 205th Corps in Kandahar in the south, the 207th Corps in Herat in the west, the 209th Corps in Mazar-e Sharif in the north, and the newest Corps, the 215th in Helmand in the southwest. ANA "Corps" follow the European model, in which a Corps is a two-star headquarters, whose subordinate units are brigades—much like a U.S. Army Division.

The ANA also includes the ANA Air Force (ANAAF), known until June 2010 as the ANA Air "Corps." While the ANAAF remains part of the ANA, the change in nomenclature recalls Afghanistan's tradition, dating back to 1924, of maintaining an independent air force. By the 1980's, after several periods of substantial Soviet assistance, Afghanistan had built a rather formidable air force. During the Taliban era, Pakistan assumed the foreign patronage role. During the war in 2001 that ousted the Taliban, Afghanistan's fleet was largely destroyed. Years of flying experience left the Afghans some human capital to draw on, in building a post-Taliban air force, although experienced pilots are aging—as of 2009 their average age was approximately the average life expectancy for Afghan males. As of September 2010, the ANAAF had 50 aircraft, with plans to grow to 146 by 2016. The 50 aircraft included 27 Mi-17 helicopters; 9 Mi-35 attack helicopters; 6 C-27 airlifters; 5 AN-32 airlifters; 1 AN-26 airlifter; and 2 L-39 fixed wing jets.¹⁵⁷

The Afghan National Police (ANP) are Afghanistan's civilian security forces. The ANP includes the Afghan Uniform Police (AUP), responsible for general policing, who serve at regional, provincial and district levels; the Afghan Border Police (ABP), who provide law enforcement at Afghanistan's borders and entry points; the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), a specialized police force that provides quick reaction forces; and the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), which provides law enforcement support for reducing narcotics production and distribution.

ANSF Target Endstrengths

Over time, the target endstrengths for the army and police have grown significantly, and debates about both medium-term and long-term appropriate endstrengths are ongoing.

¹⁵⁷ "Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)", NATO Media Backgrounder, October 26, 2010, available at http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/1667-10_ANSF_LR_en2.pdf.

The Bonn Agreement established remarkably low targets: 70,000 for the ANA, and 62,000 for the ANP, for a total force of 132,000 personnel. Though the debates took several years to coalesce, in time, Afghan and international practitioners, and outside experts, began to urge raising the target figures. Counterinsurgency experts suggested that based on estimated population figures—difficult to calculate after 30 years of war and displacement—Afghanistan could require a total force of as many as 600,000, including army and police, even after taking into consideration that the insurgencies are not active in all parts of Afghanistan. Counterinsurgency expert John Nagl, who had helped train U.S. personnel to train the ANSF, paring back the “COIN math” still further, argued in November 2008 that the army alone should grow to 250,000.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, Afghan Minister of Defense Wardak has argued consistently for a larger force. In 2008 he stated that Afghanistan had never yet had the proper proportion of troops to the area to be secured and to the population to be protected. Current force sizing, he noted, assumed the presence of a large international force—which would not always be there, and whose capabilities, he argued, were roughly double that of their Afghan counterparts. He concluded that “between 200,000 and 250,000 would be the proper size for the ANA.”¹⁵⁹ In his 2009 *Initial Assessment*, then-ISAF Commander GEN McChrystal argued that the total ANSF target endstrength should be raised to 400,000 troops, including 240,000 in the ANA, and 160,000 in the ANP.¹⁶⁰

After several incremental increases, in January 2010, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board—the high-level forum co-led by the Afghan government and UNAMA—endorsed increasing the endstrength targets to 134,000 ANA and 109,000 ANP by October 2010, and to 171,600 ANA and 134,000 ANP by October 2011.¹⁶¹ As of February 2011, a little more than 270,000 ANSF were assigned, including 152,000 ANA and 118,000 ANP.¹⁶²

As of early 2011, the Afghan government, the U.S. government and other Allied governments were reportedly considering a proposal to raise the total target endstrength for October 2012 as high as 378,000, including 208,000 ANA and 170,000 police. In many countries, “force sizing” would be based on a rigorous calculus concerning expected future security challenges and the most effective combination of capabilities for meeting those challenges. Minister of Defense Wardak has taken a longer-term look at possible future requirements, including the traditional military role of providing external defense. He has suggested sizing the ANA by comparing it with the armies of Afghanistan’s neighbors—Pakistan, Iran, and “the bear to the north.” To balance between current and future requirements, he has urged equipping the ANA “with a mix, right from the beginning, so it works for COIN and later on.” Afghanistan needs a force that is “light but as effective as heavy forces,” he added, and should include tanks and an infantry

¹⁵⁸ “All Things Considered,” National Public Radio, November 18, 2008, interview with John Nagl, transcript available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97170621>: ANA should grow to 250,000.

¹⁵⁹ Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹⁶⁰ General Stanley McChrystal, Commander’s Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140.

¹⁶¹ “Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF),” NATO Media Backgrounder, October 26, 2010, available at http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/1667-10_ANSF_LR_en2.pdf.

¹⁶² LTG William Caldwell, Prepared Remarks to the NATO Military Committee, February 21, 2011, available at <http://www.ntm-a.com/documents/Prepared%20Remarks%20by%20LTG%20William%20B%20Caldwell%20IV%20to%20the%20Military%20Committee.pdf>.

combat vehicle—protected mobility with some firepower.¹⁶³ Yet it is not clear to what extent the new proposed endstrength increase reflects a detailed analysis of requirements of all of Afghanistan’s forces over time, including their respective roles and missions.

Command and Control

Command and control arrangements for the ANSF have been adapted to current counterinsurgency efforts, which require “joint” action by multiple Afghan forces together with coalition counterparts. The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior maintain formal command authority over their own forces—the ANA and the ANP, respectively.

To facilitate coordination, the Afghan government created a series of Operations Coordination Centers, at the regional (OCC-R) and provincial (OCC-P) levels. OCCs at both levels are physical (not virtual) facilities that are designed to facilitate monitoring and coordination of operational and tactical-level operations. In principle, OCCs include representatives from the ANA; the ANP; and the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghanistan’s intelligence service, though ISAF officials note that achieving full staffing has been a challenge. The command relationships among the participating organizations are purely “coordination,” not “command.” For example, as contingencies arise, OCC members provide direct conduits of information to their respective organizations—OCC-P members reach out to ANA brigades and ANP provincial command centers; while OCC-R members reach out to ANA Corps and ANP regional command centers. OCC-Ps do not report to OCC-Rs, and there is no national-level analogue. The ANA generally serves as the “lead agency” for OCCs, although OCCs may be physically located in police facilities. Looking to the future, some observers have wondered how appropriate the OCC construct will prove to be for a “post-COIN” context when, for example, the focus of the ANA shifts from domestic to external concerns. A future transition might not prove especially difficult, since the OCC coordination relationships complement but do not replace the formal service command relationships.

Training the ANSF

Training Afghan forces has been a key concern of the international community since the Taliban fell. The history of those efforts to date includes a great variety of actors and approaches, though with a tendency toward greater cohesion over time catalyzed by strong U.S. leadership and by the creation of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A).

The December 2001 Bonn Conference recognized the need for the international community to help the fledgling Afghan authorities with “the establishment and training of new Afghan security and armed forces.” In early 2002, broad agreement was reached on a model in which individual “lead nations” would assume primary responsibility to coordinate international assistance in five different areas of security—these included placing ANA development under U.S. leadership, and police sector development under German leadership. The 2006 Afghanistan Compact transferred formal “lead” responsibility to the Afghan government.

In 2002, to execute its “lead nation” role, the United States created the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A) to train the ANA. That year, to supplement German efforts,

¹⁶³ Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

the U.S. government also launched a police training initiative, led by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), through U.S. Embassy Kabul, with contractor support. In 2005, the U.S. government restructured its ANSF training efforts, shifting responsibility for supporting Afghan police development to the Department of Defense, and renaming the OMC-A the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan (OSC-A).¹⁶⁴ Early in 2007, when the U.S. three-star military headquarters, the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A), was deactivated, OSC-A was re-designated the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), and assigned directly to U.S. Central Command. CSTC-A was assigned to USFOR-A when that headquarters was established in 2008. When NTM-A was established in 2009, with a mandate to support institutional training and development for both the army and the police, its new Commander, LTG Caldwell, was dual-hatted as the Commanding General of CSTC-A.

Today, NTM-A supports institutional training for all of Afghanistan's forces: from basic training, to military branch schools, to service academies, and eventually to "war college" (senior service school). In each case, the proposed trajectory includes transitioning lead responsibility for the institution to Afghans, and later pulling back even further to provide only minimal oversight and support.¹⁶⁵

NTM-A officials point out that Afghans have increasingly assumed the training roles. A major constraint has been that with low numbers of forces in the middle of a war, ANSF leaders found it difficult to pull experienced officers and non-commissioned officers from the fight to serve as trainers. As the total force has grown, that pressure has eased somewhat.¹⁶⁶

The other major form of training, in addition to training in institutions, is training on the job, with the support of coalition embedded training teams. Over time, and depending on the nationality of the team members, the teams have varied in terms of size, composition, and focus. With the establishment of the ISAF Joint Command in October 2009, both U.S. and other NATO teams were brought under the IJC, to help ensure synchronization of the teams' work with combined operations.¹⁶⁷

Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs), which work with the Afghan army, generally have between 11 and 28 members. As of October 2010, 22 countries were providing OMLTs, the significant majority from the United States. Police OMLTs (POMLTs) typically have between 15 and 20 members. They teach and mentor Afghan police, and may also plan and execute missions with them. As of October 2010, 11 countries were providing POMLTs, the vast majority from the United States.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ In a 2008 report, regarding the establishment of the OSC-A, DOD noted: "Efforts prior to this time were not comprehensive and lacked both resources and unity of effort within the international community." See Department of Defense, *United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces*, June 2008, p.21, available at http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/united_states_plan_for_sustaining_the_afghanistan_national_security_forces_1231.pdf. The OSC-A, like the OMC-A, reported to the U.S. military command in Afghanistan, but received policy guidance from the U.S. Chief of Mission, while contract management authority remained with State INL.

¹⁶⁵ Communications from NTM-A officials, 2009, 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Communications from NTM-A officials, 2009, 2010.

¹⁶⁷ Communications from IJC officials, 2009.

¹⁶⁸ "Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)", NATO Media Backgrounder, October 26, 2010, available at http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/1667-10_ANSF_LR_en2.pdf.

U.S. and NATO officials have long underscored the need for more training teams. In a January 2011 report, the U.S. Government Accountability Office assessed that as of November 2010, there was a shortfall of 275 out of 1,495 institutional trainers, and as of September 2010, there was a shortfall of 41 out of 205 embedded training teams, both for the ANA alone.¹⁶⁹ The rest of the required positions were either filled or pledged to be filled.

Partnering with the ANSF

The use of small embedded training teams to coach and mentor host nation units is distinct from the practice of “unit partnering”, in which full coalition units build relationships with a host nation security force units.

In Afghanistan in late 2008, the use of unit partnering was still *ad hoc* and infrequent, a natural consequence of a light coalition footprint. Nevertheless, at that time, commanders of battlespace-owning U.S. units underscored the importance of such partnerships—as one commander described it, “ANSF capacity-building is our main effort, and we accept some risk in our operational capabilities to focus on this.” One U.S. brigade-sized Task Force had taken the initiative in sending a tactical command post including key brigade staff, for two weeks every month, to co-locate and partner with the nearest ANA Corps headquarters.¹⁷⁰ In late 2008, some senior Afghan officials remained skeptical about the whole “unit partnering” concept. Defense Minister Wardak argued forcefully: “There is some talk that we should do partnering, but I am against it—our units are standing on their own feet. I will try very hard to push against this partnering. If they have partner units, they would lose their ability to learn and operate independently.”¹⁷¹ CSTC-A officials argued similarly, at the time, that ANSF units tended to perform less well when partnered with coalition units, and that advisory teams were more effective than “partners” in encouraging the ANSF to take initiative.¹⁷²

In his August 2009 *Initial Assessment*, GEN McChrystal called for a consistent and radically enhanced partnering effort, based on living, eating, sleeping, planning, training, and executing with Afghan partners, 24/7.¹⁷³ Since then, the practice of co-locating units has grown substantially.

The earliest and in many ways most intuitive partnering efforts were with the ANA—between units of relatively like size and like purpose. In 2009, ISAF’s Regional Command-East took the bold step of deploying each of its two Deputy Commanding Generals, each supported by a tactical command post staff, to co-locate with an Afghan National Army Corps headquarters. Some ISAF and Afghan army brigades are similarly co-located, as are some ISAF battalions with counterpart Afghan *kandaks* (“battalions”). ISAF Regional Command-South Commander Major General Terry reported in January 2011 that partnering with the ANA had paid dividends, that

¹⁶⁹ Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security: Afghan Army Growing but Additional Trainers Needed, Long-Term Costs Not Determined,” January 2011, available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1166.pdf>.

¹⁷⁰ Communications from Task Force Currahee leadership, 2008.

¹⁷¹ Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹⁷² CSTC-A officials, Interviews, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹⁷³ General Stanley McChrystal, Commander’s Initial Assessment, August 30, 2009, available in redacted form from the *Washington Post* at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140; and communications from ISAF officials, 2009.

Afghan army units were “becoming more and more competent,” and that this had allowed ISAF “to thin our partnership with them and refocus our efforts on the Afghan National Police and the Afghan Border Police.”¹⁷⁴

Partnering with Afghan police forces may be a less natural or obvious “fit” since their roles are not equivalent, for example, to those of U.S. Army infantry troops. In practice, partnering with the Uniformed Police or Border Police may also involve co-location, 24/7, at police stations. For Afghan police units with dispersed footprints, partnering may involve substantial planning and execution of missions together.

Partnering with all of the ANSF, ISAF commanders frequently stress, yields dividends quite different from those generated by embedded teams alone—partnering allows coalition forces to “show”, not just “tell”, across all staff positions. It establishes close relationships between Afghan and coalition commanders of roughly equivalent rank, who are well-placed to hold each other accountable for living up to commitments.¹⁷⁵ Where Afghan units have been tainted by corruption, partnering allows ISAF units to keep an eye on their Afghan partners around the clock. One major downside of partnering is the quantity of forces—of warfighting military units—required to make it work. A partial mitigation of that concern may be that the requirement for intensive, 24/7 partnering with any given host nation unit is typically temporary—perhaps 18 months or two years, depending on the circumstances.

Operational Effectiveness

Using a classified assessment system, the ISAF Joint Command regularly evaluates the operational effectiveness of ANSF units and their leadership.

In general, the ANA remains the most capable force, benefiting in part from a significant head start in terms of force generation, training, and real-world experience. According to ISAF Commanders, one of the great emerging strengths of the ANA is its leadership. Many though not all Afghan commanders clearly take responsibility for combined operations and appear to be increasingly effective in leading their own staffs and subordinate units.¹⁷⁶ The ANA is under some pressure to foster emerging leaders due to a significant demographic gap of personnel roughly between the ages of 35 and 55, the legacy of Afghanistan’s recent history of warfare. While the ANA can draw on its “older” personnel now to serve in leadership capacities, it will effectively take a generation to fully train and prepare the next contingent of ANA senior leaders.

Meanwhile, one of the biggest challenges to full ANA effectiveness is the lingering lack of sufficient enablers, including logistics; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR); and air capabilities such as close air support (CAS). The ANA continues to rely on U.S. and ISAF forces in these areas.

By most accounts the ANA Air Force has generated real capabilities, if not yet the capacity that Afghan leaders project they will need in the future. The ANAAF has made significant use of their Mi-17 helicopter fleet to move Afghan troops, to conduct search and rescue missions including

¹⁷⁴ DoD News Briefing, Major General James Terry and Senior Civilian Representative Henry Ensher, January 13, 2011.

¹⁷⁵ Communications from ISAF Commanders, 2009, 2010.

¹⁷⁶ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010, 2011.

after an avalanche in the Salang pass north of Kabul, and to provide humanitarian assistance at home and in Pakistan in the wake of the floods.¹⁷⁷

In general, the operational effectiveness of the Afghan National Police is regarded as lagging. The most fundamental challenge faced by the ANP is a deeply embedded system of graft and corruption in which would-be police officials purchase their jobs, pay on a regular basis to keep those jobs, and seek every opportunity to extract or extort revenues from the Afghan people in order to make those payments.¹⁷⁸ Some observers charge that such corruption is more than an obstacle to a job well done, in that it also alienates the Afghan people, who may turn to the Taliban with active or passive support, in frustration.¹⁷⁹

Within the ANP, the growth and development of the Afghan Border Police is further behind than that of the Afghan Uniformed Police. The ABP face challenges from insufficient capacity, endemic corruption similar to that of the AUP but with more even more temptation to cheat in the form of border crossing revenues, and the tough problem of securing Afghanistan's borders themselves. Afghanistan has nearly 3,500 miles of borders, primarily in difficult, remote, mountainous terrain. Minister of Defense Wardak has flatly observed, "We will never be able to secure the whole border."¹⁸⁰ Protecting the borders, some officials suggest, may require not only better trained and more professional ABP personnel stationed along the border, but also additional aerial reconnaissance and quick response forces.¹⁸¹

Integration of effort among the various security forces is improving, ISAF officials report, catalyzed in part by necessity including many months of intensive combined operations, particularly in southern Afghanistan, in 2009 and 2010. At the same time, ISAF and Afghan officials report the clear preservation of distinct "cultures", including a tendency for the army and police not to give each other the benefit of the doubt. Past examples of disregard for the authority of other forces have included racing through each other's check points. Some officials point to the July 2010 nomination of Bismillah Khan Mohammadi to serve as Minister of Interior—after many years of service as the Army's Chief of the General Staff in the Ministry of Defense—as a potentially helpful bridge between the two ministries.¹⁸²

An additional element of effectiveness is the ability of all of Afghanistan's security forces to be accepted by the communities, as well as the nation, in which they work. One key to that end is achieving a roughly representative ethnic balance within the forces. Some observers have pointed to the ANA as Afghanistan's only truly "national" institution because most troops agree to serve anywhere in the country, and because the force is roughly ethnically balanced. In the immediate post-Taliban years, ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks—strongly represented in the Northern Alliance—

¹⁷⁷ Communications from ISAF and IJC officials, 2009, 2010.

¹⁷⁸ General David McKiernan, Atlantic Council, Washington, DC, November 18, 2008, transcript available at http://www.acus.org/event_blog/general-david-d-mckiernan-speaks-councils-commanders-series/transcript. ISAF officials, Interviews, Kabul, Kandahar, Bagram, Afghanistan, November 2008; and communications from ISAF officials, and from Afghan citizens, 2009, 2010.

¹⁷⁹ See Sarah Chayes, "Clean Up the Afghan Government, and the Taliban Will Fade Away," *Washington Post*, December 14, 2008. She argues: "Now, Afghans are suffering so acutely that they hardly feel the difference between Taliban depredations and those of their own government." She quotes one local resident of Kandahar as saying: "The Taliban shake us down at night, and the government shakes us down in the daytime."

¹⁸⁰ Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹⁸¹ Communications from ISAF officials, 2008, 2011.

¹⁸² Communications from ISAF and Afghan officials, 2009, 2010.

predominated in Afghanistan's fledgling army, at the expense of ethnic Pashtuns. To help rebalance the force, the MoD established targets for the ANA that roughly mirror the population as a whole: 44% Pashtun, 25% Tajik, 10% Hazara, 8% Uzbek, and 13% other ethnicities. The U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that as of September 2010, Pashtuns remained under-represented, while Tajiks and Hazaras remained over-represented—and in particular, Tajiks comprised 40% of the Army's officer corps.¹⁸³ While the Army's ethnic balance is becoming more representative, its geographical balance is still skewed—most of the Army's ethnic Pashtun recruits do not come from predominantly Pashtun-populated southern Afghanistan. Relatively new recruiting drives that promise southern Pashtun recruits the opportunity to serve in the ANA Corps that are based in the south may help to shift the balance.¹⁸⁴

Afghan Local Police

Afghan, ISAF, and Administration officials have indicated that the Afghan Local Police (ALP), established by President Karzai in August 2010, is a critical part of the overall campaign. The intent is to foster organized local groups to provide some security for their communities, under formal command by the Ministry of Interior, and with oversight provided by local government officials, local security force leaders, and local communities.¹⁸⁵ In February 2011, ISAF Commander General Petraeus estimated that the growing program included just over 3,000 participants, at 17 validated sites.¹⁸⁶ Officials have indicated an intention to further develop the program significantly.¹⁸⁷

For some observers, ALP reflects the model of “arbakai”—a traditional Pashtun institution in which a tribally based auxiliary force is formed to defend a village and its surrounding area on a temporary basis. It also suggests several past coalition-Afghan experiments that yielded inconclusive results at best.

In 2006, the coalition supported the creation of the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP) program, amidst some controversy, as a stop-gap measure in southern Afghanistan. The locally recruited force, including many men who had previously worked for warlords, had an approved size of 11,271. Recruits were given ten days of training, and members received the same salaries as regular ANP street cops—\$70 per month.¹⁸⁸ A number of practitioners and observers argued at the time that the training was insufficient to produce a credible security force, and perhaps more importantly, the ANAP received little to no oversight by the coalition or Afghan forces. In 2008, looking back, one CSTC-A Commanding General called the program “an attempt to take short-cuts” and its participants “a bunch of thugs,” and an RC-East senior official concluded that they “went brigand.”¹⁸⁹ By late 2008, the program had been completely dismantled.

¹⁸³ Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security: Afghan Army Growing but Additional Trainers Needed, Long-Term Costs Not Determined,” January 2011, available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1166.pdf>.

¹⁸⁴ Communications from NTM-A officials, 2010, 2011.

¹⁸⁵ Communications from ISAF and Administration officials, 2009 and 2010. See also “Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF),” NATO Media Backgrounder, October 26, 2010, available at http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/1667-10_ANSF_LR_en2.pdf.

¹⁸⁶ Matthew Green, Interview with General David Petraeus, *Financial Times*, February 7, 2011.

¹⁸⁷ Communications from ISAF and U.S. Government officials, 2010, 2011.

¹⁸⁸ See Andrew Wilder, “Cops or Robbers? The Struggle to Reform the Afghan National Police,” *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, July 2007.

¹⁸⁹ See Jerome Starkey, “US attacks UK plan to arm Afghan militias,” *The Independent*, January 14, 2008; and Murray (continued...)

In 2008, far more artfully, ISAF, under GEN McKiernan, launched a “community guard program,” designed to take a bottom-up, community-based approach to security.¹⁹⁰ It shared a key assumption with the current ALP program, that neither international forces nor the ANSF had sufficient numbers to provide full population security, and were not likely to have them in the near future. The program was sparked by recognition of the need to protect Highway 1, the key artery running south from Kabul to Kandahar and the site of escalating insurgent attacks in mid-to-late 2008. In the program, community-based *shuras* (councils) helped select and vet program participants. Participants received some training from the Ministry of Interior, and then served in their local communities, providing a neighborhood watch function and guarding fixed sites, with oversight provided by coalition forces. The first major geographical focus for the program was Wardak province, just south of Kabul, where it was known as the Afghan Public Protection Program (“AP3”). Muhammad Halim Fidai, Governor of Wardak province, was quoted as saying: “We don’t have enough police to keep the Taliban out of these villages and we don’t have time to train more police—we have to fill the gap now.”¹⁹¹ In practice, it required a quite significant commitment from U.S. Special Operations Forces, always in high demand but short supply, who partnered very closely with each AP3 team.

By 2009, community defense programs had become a growth industry. The U.S. Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) maintained small teams in less-populated areas, with little to no formal ANSF or conventional coalition force presence—areas ideally suited to some form of community defense. CFSOCC-A identified opportunities and then worked closely with ISAF, and through ISAF with Afghan senior officials, to ensure support for such efforts. Nomenclature included the Community Defense Initiative (CDI), Local Defense Initiative (LDI), and an array of similar initiatives designed for individual special circumstances.

Meanwhile, Afghan institutions also recognized the potential value of using local communities to fill in gaps in the provision of security. The National Directorate of Security (NDS), led until 2010 by Director Amrullah Saleh, an ethnic Tajik from Panjshir province, was particularly vigorous in launching local self-defense initiatives in northern provinces of Afghanistan. In 2009 and 2010, some observers were struck by the realization that no single institution had a full accounting of all the local armed groups, including *ad hoc* formations, operating throughout the country.¹⁹²

The formalization of ALP, including the apparent intent to develop the program on a relatively large scale, initially prompted concerns from some Afghan officials. Defense Minister Wardak echoed statements he had made two years earlier: “We should not create new warlords or reinforce old ones.”¹⁹³

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Brewster, “NATO Disbands Afghan Auxiliary Police,” *Edmonton Sun*, May 15, 2008; MG Robert Cone, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008; RC-East official, Interview, Bagram, Afghanistan, November 2008.

¹⁹⁰ General David McKiernan, Atlantic Council, Washington, DC, November 18, 2008, transcript available at http://www.acus.org/event_blog/general-david-d-mckiernan-speaks-councils-commanders-series/transcript; and “U.S. Backs Plan for Engaging Afghan Tribes,” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, December 30, 2008.

¹⁹¹ Jon Boone, “Afghans Fear U.S. Plan to Rearm Villages,” *Financial Times*, January 12, 2009.

¹⁹² Communications from ISAF officials and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

¹⁹³ Minister of Defense of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Wardak, Interview, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

The 2010 Afghan Local Police program was designed in part to address some of the concerns and issues raised by past local defense initiatives. To avoid controversy, it began with clear Afghan and ISAF agreement, hammered out in a series of meetings between President Karzai and GEN Petraeus in Summer 2010. In the absence of a comprehensive accounting of all existing self-defense bodies, the ALP program was nevertheless designed to consolidate all known coalition and Afghan local self-defense programs. The ALP program included strong oversight role for community *shuras*—easier to achieve, by 2010 and 2011, as improved security and some community development efforts by the international community helped foster inclusive local councils. To ensure oversight by the coalition, ISAF dedicated a conventional infantry battalion to support CFSOCC-A in its ALP efforts; in early 2011 GEN Petraeus indicated his willingness to dedicate even more forces for that purpose, if required.¹⁹⁴

Counter-Terrorism Activities

Counter-terrorism activities that directly target insurgent leaders in Afghanistan have long been part of the campaign, designed to eliminate direct threats to the Afghan people, disrupt the ability of insurgent networks to operate, and change the calculus of remaining insurgent leaders about continuing the fight. Under the leadership of GEN Petraeus since June 2010, both the tempo and the impact of these efforts have increased; and ISAF has taken significant steps to publicize the results to both Afghan and international audiences. Officials note that one reason for the increase in effectiveness is the substantial increase in the availability of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets, including personnel—analysts and linguists—as well as equipment such as full-motion video platforms. Another reason, officials note, is the growing capacity of Afghan Special Operations Forces.¹⁹⁵

Civilian Casualties: Afghan Concerns, ISAF Tactical Directives

Over time, President Karzai has frequently expressed concern about civilian casualties resulting from coalition military operations. Civilian casualties have been a consistent theme of President Karzai's remarks at formal events. During his second inaugural speech, he stated, "Civilian casualties continue to remain an issue of concern to the people and government of Afghanistan."¹⁹⁶ In his opening remarks to the January 2010 London Conference, he noted, "...regrettably, civilian casualties continue to be a great concern for the people of Afghanistan," and he added, "we should also do our best to minimize the need for night raids."¹⁹⁷

In the wake of incidents with significant apparent civilian casualties, President Karzai has typically expressed himself, to the press and senior coalition officials and diplomats, in even more direct terms. In March 2011, following an incident in which nine children gathering firewood in Kunar province were killed, after being mistaken for insurgents, by fires from coalition helicopters, President Karzai reportedly contacted President Obama to express deep concern.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Matthew Green, Interview with General David Petraeus, *Financial Times*, February 7, 2011.

¹⁹⁵ See "Analysis: Gen. Petraeus Promotes Special Ops Success to Show Part of Afghan War US is Winning," Fox News, September 3, 2010; and Duncan Gardham, "Special Forces Eliminate 300 Taliban and al Qaeda Leaders, Says General Petraeus," *The Telegraph*, October 15, 2010.

¹⁹⁶ President Hamid Karzai, Inaugural Speech (unofficial translation), November 19, 2009.

¹⁹⁷ President Hamid Karzai, Opening Remarks, London Conference, January 28, 2010.

¹⁹⁸ See "Afghan President Warns Obama About Civilian Deaths," Fox News, March 2, 2011; and "Karzai Contacts (continued...)"

Also in early March 2011, while testifying before the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, Secretary of Defense Gates acknowledged President Karzai's concerns and added this comment: "I think we have done a lousy job of listening to President Karzai, because every issue that has become a public explosion from President Karzai has been an issue that he has talked to American officials about repeatedly in private."¹⁹⁹

To help address these concerns, successive ISAF Commanders have each issued a Tactical Directive to the ISAF force, designed to explain and limit judiciously the circumstances under which deadly force may be applied. In December 2008, GEN McKiernan, while assuring the force that "no one seeks or intends to constrain the inherent right of self-defense of every member of the ISAF force," underscored that "minimizing civilian casualties is of paramount importance," and "we must clearly apply and demonstrate proportionality, requisite restraint, and the utmost discrimination in our application of firepower." The Directive set specific conditions for searches and entries, stressing the importance of an ANSF lead whenever possible and the need to train our own forces "to minimize the need to resort to deadly force."²⁰⁰

In July 2009, shortly after assuming command of ISAF, GEN McChrystal issued a revised Tactical Directive, intended to emphasize more clearly the need for judicious restraint. Though the Directive itself remained classified, ISAF Headquarters released portions of it in unclassified form. The Directive articulated the theory of the case: while "disciplined employment of force entails risks to our troops....excessive use of force resulting in an alienated population will produce far greater risks." Regarding fires, it stated that "the use of air-to-ground munitions and indirect fires against residential compounds is only authorized under very limited and prescribed conditions;" the original classified version reportedly listed those conditions.²⁰¹

In August 2010, after assuming command of ISAF in June, GEN Petraeus issued a revised Tactical Directive, intended in part to put a stop to the tendency of subordinate commanders at each successively lower step in the chain of command to impose increasingly stringent restrictions on the use of force. That practice had contributed to growing concerns back home in the United States, and in other troop-contributing countries, that servicemembers on the ground were not allowed to protect themselves sufficiently. The Directive stated: "Subordinate commanders are not authorized to further restrict this guidance without my approval." The Directive also restated the broad emphasis on judicious fires, noting that "prior to the use of fires, the commander approving the strike must determine that no civilians are present," and spelling out (in the classified document) the exceptions to that rule.²⁰²

Cooperation with Pakistan

A major challenge to the counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan is the fact that the Afghanistan-Pakistan border is largely porous, and insurgents fighting in Afghanistan have long relied on safe

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Obama Over Civilian Deaths," TOLO News, March 3, 2011.

¹⁹⁹ "Gates Says U.S. Did 'Lousy Job' Listening to Karzai," Associated Press, March 2, 2011.

²⁰⁰ General David McKiernan, ISAF, "Tactical Directive", December 30, 2008.

²⁰¹ GEN Stan McChrystal, ISAF, "Tactical Directive," July 6, 2009, available at http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090706.pdf.

²⁰² ISAF News Release, "General Petraeus Issues Updated Tactical Directive", August 4, 2010.

haven and other forms of support in Pakistan. As a rule, counterinsurgency efforts assume a “closed system,” in which persistent COIN efforts, and growing popular support, can gradually smother an insurgency, but Pakistan’s open border disrupts that premise by giving Afghanistan’s insurgents a ready escape hatch. Both the U.S. government and ISAF have worked closely with Pakistani counterparts to address this challenge, at the strategic and operational levels.

Pakistan’s Border Challenge

The cross-border insurgency problem is complicated by the fact that the Government of Pakistan (GoP) has traditionally enjoyed only limited control over Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which border Afghanistan.²⁰³ The FATA is a legacy of British rule. To boost the border defenses of British India, the British gave semiautonomous status to tribes in that area by creating tribal “agencies,” largely responsible for their own security. The area became the “FATA” after independence. Regional experts Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid have argued that today, the area is used as a “staging area” for militants preparing to fight in both Kashmir and in Afghanistan.²⁰⁴

Throughout its short history, Pakistan has had deeply vested interests in Afghanistan. The international border—the British-drawn Durand Line—cuts through territory inhabited, on both sides, by ethnic Pashtuns, with significantly more Pashtuns living in Pakistan than in Afghanistan.²⁰⁵ The Pashtun population of southern Afghanistan provided the primary base of support for the Taliban during its rise. Further, many observers underscore that the Government of Pakistan has a general interest in ensuring that Afghanistan is a regional ally, in part as a balance against Pakistan’s long-simmering conflict with neighboring India. That broad interest was reflected in Pakistani support for the Afghan *mujahedin* fighting the Soviet occupiers in the 1980’s, and later, for the Taliban regime—relationships that have created difficulties in post-Taliban Afghan-Pakistani relations.

In recent years, the GoP has attempted to achieve a measure of stability along the border with Afghanistan by following the example of the British Raj and striking a series of “truces” with local power brokers. In February 2005, for example, the Pakistani military reportedly reached a peace deal with Baitullah Mahsud, leader of the Pakistani Taliban umbrella organization Tehrik Taliban-i Pakistan (TTP), and withdrew its forces from check points in the region. In mid-2006, Islamabad struck a major peace deal with insurgents in the North Waziristan agency of the FATA, agreeing to end military operations and remove local checkpoints, in return for an end to insurgent attacks on government officials.²⁰⁶ In early- and mid-2008, Pakistani forces, tried a

²⁰³ For background and analysis of the FATA, see Daniel Markey, “Securing Pakistan’s Tribal Belt,” Council on Foreign Relations, *Council Special Report* no. 36, August 2008.

²⁰⁴ See Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, “From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 6 (November/ December 2008). The authors add, “The area is kept underdeveloped and over-armed as a barrier against invaders.”

²⁰⁵ According to unclassified CIA estimates from July 2008, ethnic Pashtuns comprise 15.42% of Pakistan’s population of 172,800,048; and about 42% of Afghanistan’s population of 32,738,376. See “Pakistan” and “Afghanistan,” *The World Fact Book*, Central Intelligence Agency, available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html> and <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>.

²⁰⁶ Text of agreement available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/etc/nwdeal.html>.

similar approach, pulling back from TTP's stronghold in the South Waziristan agency.²⁰⁷ By all credible accounts, these "deals" did not lead to greater stability.

U.S. Strategy and Policy

For several years, under two successive Administrations, the U.S. government has sought to encourage Pakistani military action against insurgent strongholds inside Pakistan, through various combinations of encouragement and pressure at the strategic level. Some U.S. officials have reportedly aimed at "changing Pakistan's strategic calculus"—that is, encouraging the GoP to view not only its neighbor India but also its domestic insurgency and its Afghan affiliates, as an existential threat to the Pakistani state.²⁰⁸

Both practitioners and observers have noted that the GoP may face any of several significant challenges in taking action against Afghan insurgents enjoying safe haven on its territory: limited capabilities of the Pakistani military, faced with well-organized, well-armed insurgent groups; limited political will at the highest levels of the GoP to undertake military actions that might prove unpopular with the Pakistani people; and limited ability to directly control the behavior of "rogue" elements of the ISI.

The Obama Administration, from the outset, has characterized the war in Afghanistan as a regional problem that involves Pakistan by definition. In his March 2009 strategy speech, President Obama stated:

Pakistan's government must be a stronger partner in destroying these safe havens, and we must isolate al Qaeda from the Pakistani people. And these steps in Pakistan are also indispensable to our efforts in Afghanistan, which will see no end to violence if insurgents move freely back and forth across the border.²⁰⁹

U.S. Drone Strikes

By 2008, President Bush had reportedly authorized U.S. military cross-border operations into Pakistan, by ground or Predator unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).²¹⁰ Neither the Central Intelligence Agency nor the U.S. military officially confirms the use of the drone strikes.

To be clear, NATO's policy for ISAF does not include cross-border strikes. Asked in July 2008 whether the Alliance would go after militants in Pakistan, Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said, "My answer is an unqualified 'no.' We have a United Nations mandate for Afghanistan and that's it. If NATO forces are shot at from the other side of the border, there is

²⁰⁷ See Jane Perlez, "Taliban Leader Flaunts Power Inside Pakistan," *The New York Times*, June 2, 2008, and Jon Hemming, "NATO Beefs Up Forces Along Afghan-Pakistan Border," *Reuters*, May 19, 2008. See also Daniel Markey, "Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt," Council on Foreign Relations, *Council Special Report* no. 36, August 2008, p. 11.

²⁰⁸ Communications from U.S. officials, 2009, 2010.

²⁰⁹ President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/.

²¹⁰ See Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

always the right to self-defense but you will not see NATO forces crossing into Pakistani territory.”²¹¹

According to publicly available reporting, based primarily on accounts from people on the ground, a major early focus of the drone strikes was the South Waziristan agency in the FATA, long the home base for the TTP, the Pakistani Taliban umbrella organization; a drone strike killed TTP leader Baitullah Mahsud in August 2009. Subsequently, the focus of the drone strikes shifted to the North Waziristan agency, understood to be the stronghold of the Haqqani network, one of the major insurgencies active in Afghanistan. Observers have suggested that under the Obama Administration, the frequency of the drone attacks has increased markedly.²¹²

Senior ISAF officials have noted that cross-border attacks have yielded big operational and tactical benefits for the campaign in Afghanistan—by causing the insurgent networks to feel disconnected, and by prompting local residents in Pakistan to want al Qaeda and other outsiders to leave their communities.²¹³

At the same time, U.S. civilian and military officials acknowledge that such cross-border strikes have the potential to spark local protest and to destabilize the Government of Pakistan, still struggling to consolidate civilian rule. Outside critics point to civilian casualties reportedly caused by the drone strikes, arguing that the casualties are deeply problematic in themselves, and are also likely to generate popular disaffection with Pakistan’s fragile political leadership.²¹⁴

Tactical- and Operational-Level Cooperation

On the ground at the tactical and operational levels, the last several years have witnessed both stepped-up Pakistani unilateral military operations against domestic insurgent threats including the Pakistani Taliban; and growing tri-lateral coordination of planning and execution among Pakistani, Afghan, and ISAF forces. In early 2011, the outstanding question was whether Pakistani forces would undertake military operations in the North Waziristan agency targeting the leadership of the Haqqani network.

In July 2008, the U.S. government reportedly confronted Pakistani authorities with evidence of ties between members of the Pakistani military’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Haqqani network in the FATA.²¹⁵ That “demarche”, together with unilateral U.S. drone strikes, may have served to catalyze an ongoing series of unilateral Pakistani military operations in the FATA.

By late 2008, efforts by the Pakistani military to tackle the insurgency problem had increased noticeably. In August 2008, the Pakistani military stepped up operations in Bajaur agency, the northernmost of the seven agencies in the FATA, across from Afghanistan’s Kunar province.

²¹¹ Hamid Shalizi, “NATO Chief Says Will Not Hunt Taliban in Pakistan,” *Reuters*, July 24, 2008.

²¹² See “Scores Die as Drones Renew Attack on Pakistan’s Khyber,” BBC, December 17, 2010; and Saud Mehsud, “Pakistan Drone Strikes Bring End of Hiatus,” *Independent*, February 22, 2011.

²¹³ ISAF, Interviews, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2008.

²¹⁴ See Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, “Pakistan Drone War Takes a Toll on Militants – and Civilians,” CNN, October 29, 2009; and Christopher Rogers, Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, “Civilians in Armed Conflict: Civilian Harm and Conflict in Northwest Pakistan,” October 2010, available at <http://www.civicworldwide.org/storage/civicdev/documents/civic%20pakistan%202010%20final.pdf>.

²¹⁵ Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, “C.I.A. Outlines Pakistan Links with Militants,” *New York Times*, July 30, 2008.

ISAF officials with access to imagery noted that after the operations, Bajaur resembled Fallujah, Iraq, after kinetic coalition operations there in November 2004—that is, with some allowances for the more rural setting in Pakistan, destruction from the relatively heavy-handed Bajaur operations was considerable. According to ISAF officials, while the Pakistani operations suggested some room for improvement in the “soft” skills of counterinsurgency, they had an impact by disrupting insurgent networks.²¹⁶

In late 2009, after the August 2009 death of Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mahsud, the Pakistani military launched an offensive in South Waziristan agency, the TTP stronghold. In 2010, Pakistani forces launched operations in Orakzai agency, where some TTP affiliates had fled in the wake of the South Waziristan operations. Subsequent foci included the Kurram agency, and then—and currently—the Mohmand agency, still primarily targeting the TTP.²¹⁷

Meanwhile, tri-lateral cooperation among Pakistani, Afghan, and ISAF forces has been quietly growing at the tactical and operational levels. By late 2008, at the tactical level, U.S. ground forces in eastern Afghanistan reported that the tenor of their regular tactical-level border coordination sessions had grown more constructive. Tactical-level coordination had improved—including cases of direct cross-border coordination with Pakistani forces, to “fix and defeat the enemy at the border,” particularly along the border with Afghanistan’s Paktika province.²¹⁸

By early 2011, three-way operational-level planning sessions were being held regularly, to coordinate “complementary” operations on both sides of the border. In February 2011, IJC Commander LTG Rodriguez explained that ongoing Pakistani military operations in Bajaur and Mohmand agencies in Pakistan complemented combined Afghan and ISAF operations in Kunar province in Afghanistan, and served to “squeeze” insurgents caught in the middle.²¹⁹

Governance and Anti-Corruption Efforts

Afghan officials, international practitioners, and outside observers have all stressed the centrality of “governance” to the combined Afghan and international effort. In his second inaugural address, President Karzai stressed the importance of good governance “practiced by good and authoritative executives.”²²⁰ In December 2010, announcing the results of the Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review, President Obama confirmed that governance—“our civilian effort to promote effective governance and development”—remained one of the three key areas of U.S. strategy for Afghanistan, together with security and Pakistan.²²¹ And state-building expert and

²¹⁶ U.S. military officials, Interviews, Kabul and Bagram, Afghanistan, November 2008. More than one official cited in this context the phrase from Roman historian Tacitus: “They make a desert and call it peace.”

²¹⁷ See Reza Jan, Nicholas Patella, Benjamin Schultz, “Pakistani Military Operations in Orakzai,” Critical Threats, American Enterprise Institute, May 13, 2010; “Army Operation Successfully Completed in Kurram: Sec FATA,” *Dawn*, February 19, 2011; “Areas Cleared of Militants: Mohmand PA,” *The News*, March 1, 2011.

²¹⁸ Task Force Currahee officials, Interviews, Khowst Province, Afghanistan, November 2008.

²¹⁹ See DoD News Briefing with LTG Rodriguez, February 1, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4764>; and Matthew Green, Interview with General David Petraeus, *Financial Times*, February 7, 2011. See also DoD News Transcript, Colonel Andrew Poppas, Commander, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, from Jalalabad, Afghanistan, January 5, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4746>.

²²⁰ President Hamid Karzai, Inaugural Speech (unofficial translation), November 19, 2009.

²²¹ President Barack Obama, “Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review,” December 16, 2010, available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-\(continued...\)](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-(continued...))

long-time Afghanistan practitioner Clare Lockhart has asserted, “A country is not stable until it has a functioning state that performs key functions for its citizens.”²²² While civilian agencies typically play the lead roles in supporting Afghan governance, international military forces typically play strong supporting roles in this arena, through engagement with Afghan interlocutors at all levels.

There is less agreement, however, about two key aspects of the role of governance in the overall campaign.

First, there is a lack of consensus on the relationship between governance and security efforts, including both their relative timing and their relative importance. For several years, some officials have characterized the relationship this way—that security “creates time and space” for governance and development. That formulation suggests that once sufficient security conditions pertain, governance will simply—automatically—take root and grow. Others suggest that governance requires efforts as concerted as those in the security realm, and also that while some initial security may be necessary to begin governance efforts, governance itself is part of what ensures durable security.²²³

Second, there is a marked lack of consensus about just how “good” that governance needs to be in order to provide a solid foundation for Afghanistan’s future stability. The U.S. and Afghan governments have affirmed repeatedly that countering corruption is a key part of the effort. Rolling out the results of his Administration’s first strategy review, in March 2009, President Obama stated, “We cannot turn a blind eye to the corruption that causes Afghans to lose faith in their own leaders.”²²⁴

President Karzai has repeatedly pledged to put a stop to corruption. In his second inaugural address he stated, “The Government of Afghanistan is committed to end the culture of impunity and violation of law and bring to justice those involved in spreading corruption and abuse of public property.”²²⁵ At the January 2010 London Conference, he told the gathering emphatically:

Fighting corruption will be the key focus of my second term in office. My government is committed to fighting corruption with all means possible, including punishing those who commit it and rewarding those who avoid it.... We are determined to put an end to the culture of impunity as we move along the path of rule of law and democracy. We will stridently follow those who break the law, and encourage and protect those who assist in implementing the law.²²⁶

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²²² Clare Lockhart, “Learning from Experience,” *Slate*, November 5, 2008.

²²³ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010.

²²⁴ President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/.

²²⁵ President Hamid Karzai, Inaugural Speech (unofficial translation), November 19, 2009.

²²⁶ Statement by His Excellency Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, London International Conference on Afghanistan, January 28, 2010.

Yet practitioners and observers have disagreed markedly about “how much is enough”, that is, about the extent to which corruption—a recognized facet of the Afghan landscape—fundamentally threatens Afghanistan’s future stability.

Capacity-Building

Early coalition and Afghan efforts focused on fostering governance through capacity-building, with an emphasis on ensuring that minimum required numbers of Afghan personnel were in place.

Human Capital

The perceived significant need for capacity-building has been driven by serious challenges in the realm of human capital. Decades of war, displacement, and repression have decimated much of Afghanistan’s real and potential work force. Some observers stress that many Afghans lack the skills, the experience, the education, or even the basic literacy to work effectively in the post-Taliban polity or economy.

But the human capital landscape may not be as bleak as some suggest.

First, in geographic areas into which the insurgencies have encroached, local officials may have removed themselves and their families—for example, in Helmand province, relocating from Taliban-influenced districts such as Nawa to the provincial capital Lashkar Gah. Such officials may be available and willing to serve, once security conditions so permit.²²⁷

Second, even through years of conflict and displacement, many Afghans did acquire education and experience, and they are now well-qualified to play professional roles. But for many of these Afghans, the most natural career choice is to work for the international community—for Embassies, international organizations, or non-governmental organizations—which pay significantly higher salaries and impose fewer roadblocks to employment, than do government positions. Some Afghans working as Foreign Service Nationals at the U.S. Embassy, or at U.S. PRTs, have described their own preference, in principle, to work for Afghan ministries. But they argue that to do so, they would have to pay bribes even to get an interview, and that ministry salaries are not high enough to support a family. Salaries would be even less sufficient, they argue, if they were assigned to relocate to a remote, unfamiliar district in which they had no relatives to live with.²²⁸ The problem in these cases is thus not a lack of human capital, but rather a market broadly defined that does not favor government service.

Finally, some coalition officials point out that the standards for serving in the Afghan government need meet only the basic requirements for Afghanistan. For example, it is argued, while at the highest levels, senior officials of the Afghan National Security Forces now frequently communicate with coalition partners by means of PowerPoint, at the tactical level, it is perfectly acceptable for small units to conduct planning using hard copies of terrain maps.²²⁹ In 2009, in Sarkani district, Kunar province, an Afghan ministry representative charged with adjudicating

²²⁷ Communications from Afghan officials, Lashkar Gah and Nawa, 2009.

²²⁸ Communications from Afghan Foreign Service Nationals, 2009, 2010.

²²⁹ Communications from ANA leadership, and ANA kandak commanders, and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

local disputes described both his background and his work, explaining that he did not need a great deal to support his efforts. During years of displacement in Pakistan he had acquired an education. To carry out his work in Sarkani, he fostered close relationships with tribal and community leaders and relied in part on their traditional justice mechanisms. Without a computerized record-keeping system, he maintained records in stacks of giant folios. To make his services available, he traveled throughout the province—his one request, in 2009, was for a bicycle to facilitate those travels.²³⁰

Sub-National-Level Capacity-Building

At the sub-national level—for provinces and districts—capacity-building efforts in 2009 and 2010 focused on filling the relevant *tashkil*—the organizational table listing the personnel required at each level of government in each location.

Provincial- and district-level governments generally include representatives from a number of key, Kabul-based “line ministries.” Such representation is considered critical in Afghanistan’s highly centralized political system, because most resources flow out from the central government through ministerial channels, rather than directly to provincial or district governors whose formal authorities and access to resources are quite limited.

Since 2009, under the rubric of Operation *Omid*, the ISAF Joint Command, the U.S. Embassy, and several other international civilian partners have supported the Afghan-led District Delivery Program (DDP). DDP is an inter-ministerial initiative, led by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), designed to establish a basic presence of Afghan government, including some capability to be responsive to the needs of the Afghan people, in key, prioritized districts. As part of that effort, the international community has supported the Afghan Civil Service Institute’s efforts to refine a set of core capabilities required for effective provincial- and district-level service, and to make training available for current staff and new recruits assigned to work at sub-national levels.²³¹

Accountability—Afghan and International

Both Afghan and international officials have recognized that capacity in the sense of quantity alone may not be sufficient. At least as important, it is suggested, is Afghan officials’ accountability and responsiveness to the Afghan people and in turn, the people’s trust and confidence in the system. Key questions for the U.S. government and the rest of the international community include how best to encourage Afghan accountability, and how best to refine their own practices to avoid enabling corruption.

U.S. and ISAF efforts received a significant jumpstart from the establishment, in August 2010, of the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force (CJIATF) *Shafafiyat* (“transparency”) within ISAF. *Shafafiyat*’s mission includes fostering a shared understanding among Afghan and international

²³⁰ Communications from Afghan line ministry official, Sarkani, Kunar, 2009. ISAF officials later noted that the ministry official had converted his request—to a request for a motorbike, Communications from ISAF officials, 2010.

²³¹ See Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) website, http://www.afghanexperts.gov.af/index.php?page_id=26; and Independent Directorate of Local Governance website, <http://www.idlg.gov.af>. See also Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010, pp. 64-65.

practitioners of the corruption problem, including the composition and dynamics of patronage networks that enable corrupt practices. *Shafafiyat* is also charged with helping plan and execute combined anti-corruption activities, including integrating efforts with external partners, and ensuring that an anti-corruption focus pervades ISAF's normal staff functions including intelligence and operations.²³²

Appointments and Removals

A key mechanism by which the Afghan government can hold its own officials accountable is through the appointment and removal of government officials.

In practice, according to practitioners and observers, regardless of the formal modalities in place at the time, the system of appointments to key ministerial posts, and to provincial and district governor positions, has tended to operate on the basis of patronage, ultimately dispensed in many cases by President Karzai.²³³ Particularly influential provincial governors, such as Balkh province Governor Atta Mohammad Noor, and Nangarhar province Governor Gul Agha Sherzai, have tended to wield authority over district governor selections in their provinces, although that role was not formally mandated.

During the last two years, the Afghan government has taken several steps to support merit-based appointments. In November 2009, in his second inaugural address, President Karzai paved the way, stating, "We must use full care and foresight in appointing all government officials and members of the administration."²³⁴ In March 2010, the IDLG issued the 400-page *Sub-National Governance Policy*, long in development, based on the premise that "the Provincial, District, Municipal, and Village Administrations and the Provincial, District, Municipal and Village Councils shall be accountable to people living in their jurisdictions. The government at all levels exists to serve the people." The *Policy* introduced some measures designed to substitute merit for favoritism in key appointments—while provincial governors would remain political appointees, based on proposals by the IDLG and approval by the President, both deputy provincial governor and district governor positions would be treated as civil servant positions, subject to merit-based hiring.²³⁵

In October 2010, President Karzai issued a decree, based on a decision by the Council of Ministers, shifting responsibility and authority for appointing senior ministry officials and governors' senior staff to the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission. Previously, ministers and governors had exercised authority in making those appointments; based on the decree, they retained the right to make recommendations.²³⁶

²³² Communications from *Shafafiyat* officials, 2010. See also Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010.

²³³ Communications from ISAF officials, U.S. Embassy officials, Afghan interlocutors, 2009, 2010.

²³⁴ President Hamid Karzai, Inaugural Speech (unofficial translation), November 19, 2009.

²³⁵ *Sub-National Governance Policy*, Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), Spring 2010, p.19, available at <http://www.idlg.gov.af/IDLG/images/Policy/SNGP-English-Afghanistan.pdf>.

²³⁶ See Jalal Mirzad, "Karzai Will Not Decide on High-Profile Appointments," TOLO News, October 19, 2010. See also Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) website, http://www.afghanexperts.gov.af/index.php?page_id=26.

To date, the removal of officials charged with corruption, or perceived more broadly as pursuing their own interests rather than those of the people, has proven to be fraught with controversy.

The United States and key international partners have strongly supported a series of discrete initiatives by the Afghan government to develop the capability to investigate, detain, and prosecute allegedly corrupt officials. The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) and others have helped mentor and train the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU), a small team of specially selected and vetted Afghan prosecutors working for the Afghan Attorney General, which focuses on official corruption. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has worked closely with the Afghan Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) within the Ministry of Interior, which focuses on gathering evidence and building cases in the counter-narcotics arena. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.K. Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA) have mentored the Afghan Major Crime Task Force (MCTF), a specially vetted unit of investigators and prosecutors focused on so-called “major crimes”—corruption, narcotics, and kidnapping.²³⁷ In November 2009, announcing the creation of the MCTF, then-Minister of Interior Hanif Atmar reportedly stated: “The idea of the unit is that all top-level employees in Afghanistan involved in corruption should be held responsible, both civilian and military, and if proved guilty they should be fired and prosecuted in accordance with the law.”²³⁸

The work of the Anti-Corruption Unit, in particular, has been facilitated by the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), a team established in 2008 with an initial focus on tracing funding streams supporting the insurgency. The ATFC, led by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, also includes representatives from DoD, the Treasury Department, the FBI, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), as well as from the UK’s SOCA, and the Australian Federal Police.²³⁹ Over time, according to ATFC officials, the team discovered that funding channels utilized networks linking insurgents with both narcotics bosses and some Afghan government officials, and thus necessarily broadened the scope of their inquiry and analysis.²⁴⁰

In Summer 2010, based on substantial investigative work by the SIU and MCTF and a warrant issued by the Afghan Attorney General, the head of administration for the Afghan National Security Council, Mohammad Zia Salehi, was arrested on charges of corruption including accepting bribes. President Karzai responded by launching an investigation of allegedly improper practices by the officials who arrested Salehi, and by releasing Salehi from confinement.²⁴¹

In August 2010 during a visit to Kabul, Senator John Kerry met with President Karzai and stressed the importance of the SIU and MCTF. In a press statement, Senator Kerry noted: “We agreed on the importance of strengthening the Major Crimes Task Force and the Sensitive Investigative Unit. This means ensuring that they always operate as independent entities, led by Afghans welcoming expert support, and can fully pursue their mission of enhancing transparency

²³⁷ Communications from ISAF and U.S. Embassy officials, 2009, 2010. See also State Department website, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/narc/c27187.htm>.

²³⁸ Thibault Malterre, “Afghanistan Launches Unit to Tackle Corruption,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 17, 2009.

²³⁹ See Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010.

²⁴⁰ Communications from ATFC officials, 2010; and Dexter Filkins, “Letter from Kabul: The Great Afghan Bank Heist,” *The New Yorker*, January 31, 2011.

²⁴¹ See Joshua Partlow and David Nakamura, “Karzai Aide Part of Wider Investigation, Afghan Officials Say,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 2010.

and combating corruption.”²⁴² In his own comments to the press, President Karzai broadly endorsed the SIU and MCTF but used the occasion to underscore the theme of Afghan sovereignty. He stated that the two units “would always operate as independent sovereign Afghan entities, run by Afghans, allowed to pursue their mission of enhancing transparency and combating corruption free from foreign interference or political influence.”²⁴³ In September 2010, the activities of the ACU were suspended, and in November 2010, all corruption charges against Salehi were dropped.²⁴⁴

Shuras (Councils)

A key mechanism by which the Afghan people can help hold Afghan officials accountable—if somewhat indirectly—is the formation and exercise of inclusive local *shuras* (councils) at both the local community and the district levels. IJC Commander LTG Rodriguez has repeatedly stressed the importance of representative local councils to the overall campaign, to help ensure accountability.²⁴⁵ The voice of local *shuras*, backed by some form of engagement by the international community at appropriate levels of the Afghan government, can help achieve change in cases that do not meet the threshold for prosecution, or in which a sufficient evidentiary base is not available.

Such bodies reflect the traditional practice of Afghan communities to self-organize and to self-regulate, including ensuring a rough inclusiveness of all key components of the local population (except women). They are all the more important in a society largely bereft, after 30 years of conflict, of other types of checks and balances such as a vibrant well-developed media and a robust civil society. The Afghan Constitution calls for the election of district councils and prescribes a role, although not a very authoritative one, for those bodies; but those elections, initially scheduled for 2010, have been postponed indefinitely.

Across Afghanistan, three variations of local *shuras* are prevalent.

The first variation is the Community Development Councils (CDC), created to support the National Solidarity Program (NSP) launched by the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) in 2003. The purpose of the NSP program, according to the MRRD, is “to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage, and monitor their own development projects.” Local communities elect representatives to a CDC. CDCs identify priorities and craft project proposals for MRRD approval, and then the MRRD makes available block grants to the CDCs to support project execution. The program does not readily lend itself to graft and corruption—the sums are not especially large, and more importantly, the CDC, and thus all the people it represents, have full visibility on the entire funding stream. MRRD reported that

²⁴² Senator John Kerry, press release, August 20, 2010, available at <http://foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/?id=e076e039-3fd6-47fc-890e-3c4020152046>.

²⁴³ “Afghanistan’s Karzai Meets U.S. Senator Kerry, Says Anti-Corruption Units Can Operate Independently,” Fox News, August 20, 2010.

²⁴⁴ See Matthew Rosenberg and Maria Abi-Habib, “Afghanistan Blunts Anticorruption Efforts,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2010; and Joshua Partlow and Javed Hamdard, “Afghan Investigators Decry Dropped Charges in Karzai Aide’s Corruption Case,” *Washington Post*, November 9, 2010.

²⁴⁵ See DoD News Briefing with LTG Rodriguez, February 1, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4764>; and Matthew Green, Interview with General David Petraeus, *Financial Times*, February 7, 2011.

as of February 25, 2011, since the inception of NSP, 26,230 communities had elected CDCs, 55,783 project proposals had been approved, and 45,215 projects had been completed.²⁴⁶

From the perspective of the broader campaign, what may be most notable about the CDCs is their tendency to persist as standing *shuras* used by their communities for additional functions including dispute resolution even after the completion of NSP-sponsored projects. In some cases, community *shuras* have also aggregated to form district-level councils known as District Development Assemblies, which are better placed to propose and execute projects with broader geographical impact.

The second council variation is the temporary district council generated by the Afghanistan Social Outreach Program (ASOP), launched by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) in August 2007. Unlike the National Solidarity Program, in which the formation of local councils is one means toward the end of fostering community engagement in the broader development process, the creation of temporary district-level councils is the *raison d'être* of the ASOP program. The program uses a caucus-based process to facilitate the election of between 30 and 50 community leaders, religious scholars and tribal heads, to serve on the council. The councils are intended to “channel” public needs and grievances, and to provide a forum for conflict resolution, in close coordination with the District Governor.²⁴⁷

The program got off to a slow start, with a particular emphasis on Wardak province, supported by U.S. funding, and in Helmand province, supported by UK funding. In 2009 and 2010, however, as the IDLG assumed the lead coordination role for multiple Afghan civilian ministries in partnering with the international community to execute Operation *Omid*, IDLG’s ASOP program grew to play a central role in combined activities in Helmand and Kandahar provinces.²⁴⁸

In the Nawa district of Helmand province, for example, IDLG sponsored an ASOP district council election process in October 2009, some months after U.S. Marines, with some partnered Afghan forces, had conducted clearing operations and established a sustained, robust presence. Nawa residents participated actively in the election process, choosing an approximately 35-member council. Within a month, Taliban insurgents assassinated three members of the new *shura*, including its chairman. But by several months later, *shura* members had begun convening regularly again and had selected a new chairman.²⁴⁹

The third council variation relies on spontaneous, ground-up generation, drawing on traditional community self-organization practices. For example, in March 2010, approximately 150 community leaders and tribal elders gathered in the center of Manogai district, in the Pech River

²⁴⁶ See the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development website at <http://www.mrrd.gov.af/>; and the NSP website <http://www.nspafghanistan.org/>. See also John A. Nagl, Andrew M. Exum, and Ahmed A. Humayun, “A Pathway to Success in Afghanistan: The National Solidarity Program,” Center for a New American Security, March 2009.

²⁴⁷ Communications from and participant observation with IDLG officials. See Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), “Afghanistan Social Outreach Programme: Programme Document,” Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, April 2008, as well as the IDLG website at <http://www.idlg.gov.af/>. See also USAID Fact Sheet, “Afghanistan Social Outreach Program”, December 2010, available at http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/USAID/Activity/167/Afghanistan_Social_Outreach_Program_ASOP.

²⁴⁸ Communications from ISAF officials and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

²⁴⁹ Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy and local Nawa officials, 2009, 2010. See also Frank Ruggiero, “The Meaning of Marjah: Developments in Security and Stability in Afghanistan,” Statement for the Record for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 6, 2010, available at <http://foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/RuggieroTestimony100506a.pdf>.

valley in Kunar province, to protest what they perceived as the rampant corruption of the Manogai District Governor. The young Governor had been widely rumored to have paid for his position; the District Chief of Police was also widely regarded as soliciting bribes. At the March meeting, the elders signed a petition calling for the Governor's removal—at no small risk to their personal security—even though no formal mechanism existed for popular recall of appointed officials. Although the process took some time, the Governor was replaced later that year. The *shura*, for its part, continued to convene, organizing itself into a district-level standing body in April 2010. In December 2010, the IDLG and the Provincial Governor invited the *shura* to elect 45 of its members to serve as a formal ASOP council.²⁵⁰

In January 2010, 50 elders from the Shinwari tribe, which populates several districts including Shinwar of Nangarhar province, signed a document of their own, pledging their opposition to the Taliban including vowing to “burn the houses” of anyone who harbored Taliban affiliates. This bold stance was reportedly the result of months of engagement with some elements of the coalition. The Shinwari elders simultaneously took a bold stand against their own local government officials, condemning, in writing, “all the corruption and illegal activities that threaten the Afghan people.”²⁵¹

“Supporting GIRoA”

Over the past several years, the international community has had a somewhat difficult time crafting—and then describing—a supporting role to the Afghan government that also includes helping hold that government accountable. Understandably, official documents tend to err on the side of emphasizing “support.” The ISAF mandate begins, “In support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA), ISAF conducts operations....”²⁵² Over time, “support GIRoA” became shorthand for the international community's overall governance effort. Such formulations reflect one premise of counter-insurgency doctrine—the central importance of support to the host nation.²⁵³

Yet in practice, some practitioners and observers concluded that the “support GIRoA” shorthand, without further elaboration, can lead practitioners astray. For example, in 2010, one young platoon leader, fresh out of West Point, was assigned to partner with a wizened old District Governor in an eastern province of Afghanistan. Understanding his guidance to be, “Support GIRoA,” the platoon leader made a point to accompany the District Governor everywhere, to provide him with transportation throughout the district in order to “connect him with the people”, and in general to associate himself as closely as possible with the official. But local residents of that district, when queried away from the presence of any Afghan officials, expressed skepticism or even fear regarding both the Governor and his District Chief of Police. Moreover, the platoon leader's close association with these officials had convinced local residents that ISAF was part of the problem, and that change was highly unlikely.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ See 1st Lt. Nicholas Mercurio, “Kunar PRT Attends Manogai District Elections,” December 17, 2010, available at <http://www.cjtf82.com/en/regional-command-east-news-mainmenu-401/3836-kunar-prt-attends-manogai-district-elections.html>.

²⁵¹ Dexter Filkins, “Afghan Tribe, Vowing to Fight, to Get U.S. Aid in Return, *The New York Times*, January 27, 2010; and communications from ISAF officials, 2010.

²⁵² Available at ISAF website, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html>.

²⁵³ See Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006.

²⁵⁴ Communications from ISAF officials and participant observation, 2010.

The solution, officials have suggested, is to “support GIRoA”, but judiciously, and to continually gauge popular views of Afghan officials and of our own actions by engaging directly with the people. The Counterinsurgency Guidance issued by GEN Petraeus in August 2010 instructed the force to “consult and build relationships, but not just with those who seek us out,” and to “be aware of others in the room and how their presence may affect the answers you get.”²⁵⁵

Changing International Community Practices

Practitioners have noted a growing awareness over the last several years of the impact the practices of the international community can have by creating—or reducing—opportunities for graft and corruption. One critical step, officials say, is better understanding of where international funding goes and whom it empowers.

In Summer 2010, USFOR-A established Task Force 2010, assigned to establish a clear picture of U.S. contracting practices and their impact, and then to help devise remedies. The Task Force was led for its first four months by Rear Admiral Kathleen Dussault, who had served previously as the head of the Joint Contracting Command Iraq/ Afghanistan; assigning a two-star flag officer to lead the effort was understood to signal the importance of the initiative.²⁵⁶

In September 2010, General Petraeus issued “COIN Contracting Guidance” to the ISAF force. In it, he argued that if “we spend large quantities of international contracting funds quickly and with insufficient oversight, it is likely that some of those funds will unintentionally fuel corruption, finance insurgent organizations, strengthen criminal patronage networks, and undermine our efforts in Afghanistan.” The Guidance called for making contracting “Commander’s business,” for gaining understanding from local officials and the local population, for knowing who contract recipients are and how they are using the money, and for making contracting activities an integral part of the concerns of the full staff.²⁵⁷

Development Efforts

Afghan and international officials have long agreed that development efforts are essential to Afghanistan’s stabilization. Development is considered important to the campaign in two critical ways. Near-term efforts aimed at meeting people’s basic needs may help to reassure people that their needs are also likely to be met in days to come, and to encourage them to place their trust and confidence in the future. Efforts aimed at laying the groundwork for Afghanistan’s longer-term economic viability may help Afghanistan sustain itself in the future with relatively limited support from the international community. For the international community, the choices concerning how best to support Afghan economic development include both how much support to provide, and also what kinds of support are best suited to fostering an economic system that the Afghans can sustain.

²⁵⁵ General David Petraeus, “COMISAF’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” ISAF, August 1, 2010.

²⁵⁶ Communications from ISAF officials, 2010. See also Spencer Ackerman, “Military’s Anti-Corruption Chief Leaves Afghanistan After Just Four Months,” *Wired*, September 21, 2010.

²⁵⁷ General David Petraeus, COMISAF’s Counterinsurgency (COIN) Contracting Guidance, ISAF, September 8, 2010, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/from-the-commander/from-the-commander/comisafs-counterinsurgency-coin-contracting-guidance.html>.

For the U.S. government, such questions may be addressed by mid-2011, through the process of crafting a comprehensive economic strategy. The *Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011* required that the President, working with the Departments of State and Defense, produce and provide an economic strategy for Afghanistan. According to the NDAA, that strategy should support the broader counterinsurgency campaign; promote economic stabilization and development; and help create sustainable Afghan institutions.²⁵⁸ President Obama has made clear that the U.S. goal in Afghanistan is “not nation-building, because it is Afghans who must build their nation.”²⁵⁹ What is less universally agreed is the extent to which support for Afghanistan’s economic development is required in order to realize the United States’ core goals, regarding al Qaeda and future safe havens. Charting out an economic strategy, as the legislation requires, may ameliorate the apparent tension by more clearly indicating the many supporting roles that might be played by other members of the international community, including those with specialized skills such as international financial institutions.

The fundamental challenge for development work in Afghanistan is that Afghanistan is not simply a developing country, as complicated as that status alone would be. It is certainly a country that has benefitted very little to date from general growth and development, from technological advances, and from exposure to world markets and global trade opportunities. But in addition, 30 years of war and disruption have meant the deterioration of existing infrastructure, sharp though not complete limitations on the availability of human capital, and stalled or reversed development of internal supply chains and internal trade opportunities. The international community’s presence and activities over the last ten years, in turn, have deeply distorted the labor market.²⁶⁰

Integration of Development Efforts

In some senses the international community has made the challenge of providing assistance in Afghanistan all the more difficult, by failing for many years to coordinate sufficiently, let alone integrate, its efforts. Several key steps in recent years have encouraged greater coherence in international community support to development—by placing Afghan priorities, and more recently Afghan institutions, in the lead. First, in 2008, the Afghan government issued the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)*, a robust document that described at length the areas of development activity that were important to the Afghan government. The ANDS was organized around the three pillars of the 2006 Afghanistan Compact, the joint commitment to shared goals by the Afghan government and the international community. Those pillars included security; governance, rule of law and human rights; and economic and social development. The ANDS also addressed six other “cross-cutting issues” including regional cooperation, counter-narcotics, and anti-corruption.²⁶¹ If the ANDS’s great strength was comprehensiveness, according to many practitioners its great weakness may have been a lack of prioritization.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ *Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011*, Section 1535, January 7, 2011, P.L. 111-383.

²⁵⁹ President Barack Obama, “Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review,” December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>.

²⁶⁰ Communications from ISAF, World Bank officials, 2009, 2010.

²⁶¹ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan National Development Strategy: A Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth, and Poverty Reduction*, 2008, available at http://www.undp.org.af/publications/KeyDocuments/ANDS_Full_Eng.pdf.

²⁶² Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, UNAMA officials, 2009, 2010.

A second major step that has helped foster greater coherence among international community efforts was the launch of the Kabul Process, under President Karzai's second administration. The Process is based on the theme of "Afghan leadership, Afghan ownership." In the development arena, that has meant streamlining and refining the priorities of the *ANDS*, and then organizing the work of key ministries into three cluster groups, focused on new National Priority Programs—agriculture and rural development; human resources development; and economic and infrastructure development. The Ministry of Finance was assigned to provide broad leadership for the new organizational framework.²⁶³

Afghanistan's Future Economy: Opportunities and Requirements

Both practitioners and outside experts have suggested that further development efforts should be based on a clear vision of Afghanistan's future economy, including its projected sources of revenue. Components of that economy might include a better-developed agricultural sector able to process and export its produce; more comprehensive collection of revenues due to the state from border crossings and other sources; and judicious exploitation of Afghanistan's apparently sizable mineral resources. In June 2010, the Department of Defense and the U.S. Geographical Survey, who had partnered in conducting field research, announced initial findings that Afghanistan possessed mineral wealth in the form of iron, copper, cobalt, gold, and lithium, which could have a market value of one trillion U.S. dollars. Some experts have cautioned, however, that successfully managing an extractive industry would require substantial physical and legal infrastructure, which are currently lacking.²⁶⁴

Experts have suggested an array of macro-level requirements that may be particularly important to support economic development in Afghanistan. One major requirement, it is suggested, is infrastructure—including both transportation and energy supply. In the Kabul Conference Communiqué, the Afghan government pledged to set out detailed plans to "rehabilitate and expand regional transport and energy networks."²⁶⁵ Several experts have argued that the primary focus of further economic strategy ought to be transport corridors, within Afghanistan—including road and rail—and regionally, linking Afghanistan more closely with its neighbors, particularly those in Central Asia. Such regional ties could build in part on the Northern Distribution Network, established to help move nonlethal equipment and supplies to Afghanistan through Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.²⁶⁶

Another major requirement, many suggest, is developing Afghanistan's current and future labor force. At the January 2010 London Conference, President Karzai called for "improving the skill base of the labor force and creating more jobs in public and private sectors."²⁶⁷ Experts suggest

²⁶³ See London Conference Communiqué, "Afghan Leadership, Regional Cooperation, International Partnership", January 28, 2010; and Kabul Conference Communiqué, Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan, July 20, 2010.

²⁶⁴ See "Minerals in Afghanistan Worth \$1 Trillion, U.S. Says," *CNN*, June 14, 2010; and James Risen, "U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 13, 2010.

²⁶⁵ Kabul Conference Communiqué, Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan, July 20, 2010.

²⁶⁶ S. Frederick Starr, "Afghanistan Beyond the Fog of Nation-Building: Giving Economic Strategy a Chance," Central Asia Caucasus Institute, January 2011, available at <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/1101Afghanistan-Starr.pdf>; and Dr. Leif Rosenberger, "How Smart Economic Strategy Could Strengthen the Afghan Counterinsurgency," Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, February 2011, available at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/index.cfm/articles/How-Smart-Economic-Strategy-Could-Strengthen-the-Afghan-Counterinsurgency/2011/2/10>.

²⁶⁷ Statement by His Excellency Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, London International (continued...)

that more specific steps might include generating additional opportunities for vocational training and higher education. Generating a broad vision of the rough distribution of Afghanistan's future labor force, and how it might evolve over time, could help constructively shape the design of new training and educational programs. Steps might also include rationalizing public sector salaries, as well as those offered by the international community, in order to rebalance the economic incentives of the skilled and educated labor force. As of early 2011, it still made more economic sense for an educated Afghan professional to drive cars for an international NGO—or to place improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for the Taliban—than to serve as a district-level official for the Afghan government.

A third major requirement, Afghan officials and outside experts suggest, is fostering an Afghan government that can manage and execute its own budget. At the January 2010 London Conference, participants pledged to support the Afghan government's goal that within two years, 50% of international aid would be delivered through the Afghan government. Participants, including the Afghan government, agreed that reaching this target would be "conditional on the Government's progress in further strengthening public financial management systems, reducing corruption, improving budget execution, [and] developing a financial strategy and Government capacity towards that goal."²⁶⁸

Members of the international community have tended to bypass the ministries in favor of utilizing off-budget funding channels, for two major reasons. One reason is that Afghan ministries tend to have limited capacity to execute their budgets, and so more direct funding channels can be a way to accomplish a specific mission. Another reason is the perceived pervasiveness of corruption—avoiding ministerial structures at national and sub-national levels is viewed by some as eliminating opportunities for graft.²⁶⁹ While avoiding the Afghan ministerial system may prove effective for completing a given project in a timely fashion, it contradicts another fundamental purpose of assistance—to encourage the growth of Afghan systems that can sustain themselves.

For some practitioners, one logical solution is to impose stringent accountability mechanisms on ministries to guard against corruption, and then to channel funding through those institutions. This approach, it is acknowledged, can be time-consuming. Some experts suggest, perhaps counter-intuitively, that particularly robust accountability measures imposed on ministries by the international community can prove cumbersome—they may slow the process of execution and may also, with their requirements for many different signatures, create additional opportunities for corruption. An alternative, they suggest, might be the use of streamlined accountability measures that maintain adequate standards but reduce the numbers of forms and signatures required and harmonize the process across agencies and donors.²⁷⁰

Development Efforts at the Sub-National Level

Meanwhile, at the micro-level on the ground, the international community's theory of the case for development assistance has evolved, if unevenly, over time. For years, practitioners have

(...continued)

Conference on Afghanistan, January 28, 2010.

²⁶⁸ London Conference Communiqué, "Afghan Leadership, Regional Cooperation, International Partnership", January 28, 2010.

²⁶⁹ Communications from international diplomats based in Kabul, 2009, 2010.

²⁷⁰ Communications from World Bank official, 2011.

reported, the emphasis was on directly carrying out projects that seemed to benefit the local community—such as building a clinic or digging a well. Such approaches may sometimes have demonstrated good will, but they could as easily have demonstrated a certain obliviousness—for example if a clinic was built in a location with no available medical professionals to staff it, or wells were dug inadvertently in patterns that gave one local tribe better access than another to fresh water.

From that approach, the next step was frequently to consult more closely with Afghan interlocutors—to ask local officials and people what they needed. This approach has frequently been combined with an emphasis on providing assistance “through” local officials, so that they could be “seen” to be delivering services to local residents. Such efforts may have met some needs of local populations, but those needs may not have been the most urgent ones since such approaches failed to prioritize.

From the “what do you need?” approach, a further step has been more directly involving Afghan officials in the decision-making process. For example, one U.S. Brigade Combat Team (BCT) launched a “CERP as a budget” initiative, based on use of the U.S. military’s Commander’s Emergency Response Program. In this approach, the BCT “made available” a stated sum of money to provincial- and district-level Afghan officials, who prioritized requirements and created budgets based on the total sum available. (The BCT maintained actual control of the funding, for accountability purposes.) When given discretion over a total sum of money, the BCT found, Afghan officials were more likely to carefully scrutinize and prioritize their requirements.²⁷¹ A final step, representing a fundamental shift in thinking, has been toward making the Afghan budgetary system itself work.

In practice, this evolution in thinking about tactical-level development assistance has been both non-linear and incomplete, and all of these approaches toward “development” persist to some extent. Through much of 2009 and 2010, some officials from the U.S. Agency for International Development, and some U.S. military officials, continued to report on “progress” in terms of the number of projects completed and the amount of dollars spent. Historically, many practitioners have found it simplest to demonstrate “results” to their higher headquarters, and to Congressional oversight committees, in quantitative form; there may be relatively few precedents for demonstrating the impact of assistance in qualitative terms.

Development and Patronage Networks

One further, recent evolution in the collective thinking of many U.S. government civilian and military practitioners is greater awareness of the power structures and patronage networks that are empowered by assistance from the international community in Afghanistan. The early post-Taliban-regime years offered a perfect storm for neglect in this arena: large numbers of disparate donors, limited numbers of donor personnel on the ground to provide oversight, and few if any functioning Afghan institutions to help ensure the accountability of the process. Furthermore, understanding exactly who benefits from each dollar spent can be a tough analytical challenge, only recently made somewhat easier by the growing availability of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets including analysts.

²⁷¹ Communications from U.S. military officials, 2009, 2010.

By late 2010, there was a growing consensus among U.S. practitioners that if completing a project meant funding a thug, then not completing the project was the better choice. In his August 2010 Counterinsurgency Guidance, General Petraeus instructed ISAF:

Money is ammunition; don't put it in the wrong hands. Pay close attention to the impact of our spending and understand who benefits from it. And remember, we are who we fund. How we spend is often more important than how much we spend.²⁷²

Reintegration and Reconciliation Efforts

Afghan and international civilian and military practitioners have long suggested that both reintegration and reconciliation are integral parts of the overall campaign effort. Less fully agreed is the conceptual distinction between the two terms—a distinction apparently not more intuitively obvious in Dari or Pashto than it is in English.²⁷³ Some suggest that reintegration focuses on low-level fighters, while reconciliation concerns senior insurgent leaders. Others draw the distinction somewhat differently, associating reintegration with individual decision-making, and reconciliation with authoritative decisions by insurgent leaders on behalf of groups of followers.²⁷⁴ A further open question is the logical relationship between reintegration and reconciliation—in general, it is assumed that pulling lower-level fighters off the battlefield would improve prospects for higher-level conflict settlement, but there is no single agreed theory describing the predicted logic.

Afghan Government Views

While the Afghan government is far from monolithic, in a strong presidential system in which most other institutions are weak, President Karzai is generally considered the leading authoritative voice and ultimate decision-maker on reintegration and reconciliation matters. In major public statements, he has consistently advocated inviting fellow Afghan “upset brothers” back into peaceful Afghan society, and seeking broadly inclusive solutions to the overall conflict. He has distinguished the hard core of insurgents from “disenchanted compatriots who are willing to return to their homes”, by establishing basic conditions for return: no links to al Qaeda or other terrorist networks, and acceptance of the Afghan Constitution.²⁷⁵ Some observers suggest that President Karzai's apparent embrace of reconciliation may stem in part from grave uncertainty about Afghanistan's future, lack of clarity about the scope and scale of future commitment on the part of the international community, and thus a desire to leave as many options open as possible.²⁷⁶

²⁷² General David Petraeus, COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance, August 1, 2010, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/from-the-commander/from-the-commander/comisaf-s-counterinsurgency-guidance.html>.

²⁷³ Communications from Afghan colleagues, 2009, 2010.

²⁷⁴ Communications from ISAF and U.S. Embassy officials, and participant observation, 2009, 2010.

²⁷⁵ See President Hamid Karzai, Inaugural Speech (unofficial translation), November 19, 2009; and President Hamid Karzai, Opening Remarks, London Conference, January 28, 2010.

²⁷⁶ Communications from Administration and ISAF officials, 2009, 2010.

U.S. Government Views

U.S. government policy strongly supports Afghan-led processes for reconciliation and reintegration. Announcing the results of his Administration's first strategy review, in March 2009, President Obama argued that Afghans "who have taken up arms because of coercion, or simply for a price" must have an opportunity to rejoin society, and he pledged that the United States would work with Afghan and international partners to support such a process.²⁷⁷ Announcing the results of the 2010 review, President Obama echoed the conditions set by President Karzai for former fighters who want to reconcile: they must break ties with al Qaeda, renounce violence, and accept the Afghan Constitution.²⁷⁸

National Consultative Peace Jirga and High Peace Council

In 2010, key events of the Kabul Process launched by President Karzai at his second inaugural, helped push reintegration and reconciliation to the front of the political stage.

In June 2010, the National Consultative Peace Jirga (NCPJ) brought together some 1,600 delegates from across Afghanistan with the stated goal of fostering consensus about a path forward toward peace. In the event's concluding Resolution, participants applauded President Karzai's "commitment and initiative to consult the nation to reach through peaceful means to a lasting peace and end to the conflict and bloodshed." The NCPJ also called specifically for the adoption of a formal program for reintegration, and for the creation of a high peace council to help manage reconciliation efforts.²⁷⁹

In July 2010, Kabul Conference participants welcomed the outcomes of the Peace Jirga, noting approvingly in their concluding, "The Consultative Peace Jirga demonstrated the strong will within Afghan society to reconcile ...differences politically in order to end the conflict." Participants also endorsed in principle detailed new plans for a formal reintegration program, and they echoed the NCPJ's call for the creation of a high peace council.²⁸⁰

In September 2010, a new 70-member High Peace Council was established. The Council, which convened for the first time in October 2010, was charged with facilitating the process of reconciliation.²⁸¹

Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program

Based on substantial work carried out throughout Spring 2010, in June 2010 President Karzai signed a decree establishing a structure for a new Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program

²⁷⁷ President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/.

²⁷⁸ President Barack Obama, "Statement by the President on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Annual Review," December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>.

²⁷⁹ "The Resolution Adopted at the Conclusion of the National Consultative Peace Jirga," Kabul, June 4, 2010.

²⁸⁰ Kabul Conference Communiqué, Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan, July 20, 2010.

²⁸¹ Martine van Bijlert, "Warlords' Peace Council," Afghan Analysts' Network, September 28, 2010; and Sayed Salahuddin, "Afghan Peace Council to Offer Concessions to Taliban," Reuters, October 21, 2010.

(APRP). Following the July 2010 endorsement by the Kabul Conference, in September 2010 the Afghan government issued a Joint Order instructing ministries and provincial governors to participate in the program. The program includes three basic components: social outreach designed to explain the program to both fighters and local communities and to encourage their participation and support; demobilization designed to remove fighters and their weapons from the battlefield and to provide accountability through registration, vetting, and biometrics; and “consolidation of peace” including training and employment opportunities to help former fighters settle down. Basic principles underlying the program include Afghan leadership with support from the international community, and the involvement of whole communities rather than just the target individuals.²⁸²

ISAF officials noted that as of early 2011, approximately 1,000 former fighters had sought formally to join the reintegration program, and close to 20 provinces had created provincial-level Reintegration Councils to oversee the process. Officials also noted that many more former fighters may have opted for “silent reintegration”—simply laying down their weapons and quietly rejoining their communities, without fanfare or formal declaration.²⁸³

Some practitioners and observers have raised questions about the ability of the APRP to avoid accusations of favoritism and special treatment to former fighters, when most local communities themselves are deeply in need after decades of war. Some have also suggested that the initiatives needed to meet the needs of local communities as well as those of reintegrating fighters, are the basic pillars of the campaign itself: improved security conditions and freedom from insurgent intimidation, trustworthy local members of the Afghan National Security Forces, responsive local Afghan government officials, and inclusive *shuras* that give the people a voice.²⁸⁴

Reconciliation Process

War termination theorists generally agree that most wars end with some form of political settlement, formal or informal. In Afghanistan, reconciliation may be more likely to take the form of an ongoing and somewhat fluid process, rather than a single series of formal talks. One reason is that the Afghan government faces challenges from multiple insurgencies—most prominently the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, which do not share the same goals and which cannot speak authoritatively for one another. Further, Afghanistan experts suggest that in such a profoundly relationship-based society, channels of communication between insurgents and regular members of society, linking fellow members of families or of tribes, are open and flowing more or less continually. Informal efforts to test the climate may be quite frequent. Observers suggest that while “exploration” may be multi-faceted and fluid, final decisions would likely be made personally by President Karzai, perhaps in consultation with a small circle of advisors. The role of the large High Peace Council is likely to focus more on outreach and exploration than on conducting sensitive negotiations.²⁸⁵

²⁸² See National Security Council, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, “Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program,” April 2010; and ISAF Force Reintegration Cell, “ISAF Reintegration Guide”, November 22, 2010, available at [https://afghancoin.harmonieweb.org/FRIC/ ... /Reintegration%20Handbook.doc](https://afghancoin.harmonieweb.org/FRIC/.../Reintegration%20Handbook.doc).

²⁸³ Communications from ISAF officials, 2011.

²⁸⁴ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010, 2011.

²⁸⁵ For an overview and analysis of reconciliation efforts from the fall of the Taliban to 2009, see Michael Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009. For reflections on prospects for reconciliation, see Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 27, 2010, available at (continued...)

Practitioners and observers have raised a number of concerns, from a variety of angles, about the inclusiveness of any reconciliation process. Some stress that a process should stringently avoid alienating non-Pashtuns, who may understandably fear the return of a Taliban-influenced political order; if a reconciliation process exacerbates those fears, non-Pashtuns might seek to mobilize their own political and security forces patronage networks to express opposition. Some stress instead the potential impact of the apparent exclusion of potentially more progressive elements of society from the nascent reconciliation process, pointing the dearth of members of Afghanistan's emerging, young civil society, and corps of journalists, in the High Peace Council. Many others have expressed concern that a Taliban-inflected political order might be unlikely to respect the rights of Afghan women. Others stress broadly the importance of giving the Afghan people a significant say throughout the process—not simply presenting them with a *fait accompli* and seeking their “buy-in.”²⁸⁶

Practitioners and observers have also raised concerns about—and debated—the timing of any reconciliation efforts against the backdrop of the overall campaign. For some, the most important factor to consider is when insurgent leaders would be most likely to agree to end the conflict, on the most favorable terms for the Afghan government and people. Some suggest that insurgent leaders are likely to be interested in talking only once they are powerfully convinced that their battlefield efforts cannot succeed—that is, they need not be defeated, but they must believe that defeat is inevitable if they continue to fight. Others argue, entirely differently, that insurgent leaders are likely to want to negotiate only from a position of strength, when they believe that they are perceived as powerful enough to warrant discussion of quite favorable—from their perspective—terms and conditions; in this view, insurgents in a position of weakness, feeling there was nothing to gain from talks, would be likely to continue their violent opposition. These two theories, perhaps disconcertingly, would lead to two very different policy prescriptions concerning the timing of potential talks against the backdrop of the campaign.

Meanwhile, others stress that the most important timing factor concerns the strength and viability of the Afghan polity—the more progress that the campaign has achieved in building competent security forces, fostering responsive government, and laying the foundations for future economic growth, the more stable the system will be, and the more readily it will be able to absorb potentially dissonant elements.²⁸⁷

Finally, debates about reconciliation have taken place simultaneously with—but not always well-integrated with—debates about the structure of Afghanistan's political system. Over time, a number of experts have suggested that a more de-centralized political order might better correspond to historical practice in Afghanistan and might have better success in meeting the needs of the Afghan people. In the context of reconciliation, one risk of significant de-

(...continued)

<http://foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Ryan%20Crocker.pdf>; and Zainab Salbi, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 27, 2010, available at <http://foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Zainab%20Salbi.pdf>. Salbi argues, “We cannot afford to compromise on women's rights in Afghanistan”.

²⁸⁶ Communications from ISAF, U.S. Embassy, and Administration officials, 2009, 2010, 2011. See also Martine van Bijlert, “Warlords’ Peace Council,” Afghan Analysts’ Network, September 28, 2010. Concerning the High Peace Council, van Bijlert wrote, “This is the old crowd. Where is the innovation, the good will, the promise of more inclusiveness demanded by such a controversial issue as ‘reconciliation’?”

²⁸⁷ Communications from ISAF officials, 2009, 2010, 2011.

centralization would be enhancing the power and authority of former insurgent leaders who might be given regional leadership roles.²⁸⁸

Metrics

In theory, orchestrating a complex contingency operation has at least three major facets. Strategy names broad objectives. Plans—working backwards from those objectives—lay out the specific steps, sequenced over time, by which those objectives will be achieved. And then a well-crafted system of assessments indicates to practitioners and outside audiences whether and to what extent the plans are working and the strategy remains valid. For the war in Afghanistan, Congress has pressed the Executive Branch to assess progress on the ground by means of a clear system of metrics, and to report regularly on those results to the Congress.

The Obama Administration, for its part, has also undertaken unilateral assessments and reviews. At the outset, announcing the results of his Administration's first strategy review for Afghanistan and Pakistan, President Obama stated, "We will set clear metrics to measure progress and hold ourselves accountable." He also indicated that the intent would be not merely to mechanically mark progress against fixed indicators, but also to re-examine the validity of the "ways and means" of the strategy itself: "we will review whether we are using the right tools and tactics to make progress towards accomplishing our goals."²⁸⁹

"1230" Reports on Security and Stability in Afghanistan

In order to help generate clear assessments and reporting, Congress, in Section 1230 of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008*, P.L. 110-181, as amended, required the Department of Defense, in coordination with other agencies, regularly to submit "Reports on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan."²⁹⁰ These reports have become known commonly as the "1230 reports."

The requirement includes "a description of the comprehensive strategy of the United States for security and stability in Afghanistan", as well as a "separate detailed section" addressing each of these topics: NATO and its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and other development initiatives; counter-narcotics activities; corruption and the rule of law; and regional considerations.

In practice, the 1230 reports tend to be robust documents that include substantial description in each focus area. The description typically provides a comparison with conditions that pertained in the previous 180-day reporting period. What the 1230 reports do not include, as a rule, is "how

²⁸⁸ Stephen Biddle, Fotini Christia, and J. Alexander Thier, "The Way Out of Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2010.

²⁸⁹ President Barack Obama, Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 27, 2009, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/.

²⁹⁰ *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008*, §1230, P.L. 110-181, January 28, 2008.

much progress is enough” in any of the focus areas; what campaign logic connects the focus areas; or what the timetable for further progress is likely to be.

They also tend to lag behind current strategic- and operational-level thinking. For example, the most recent 1230 Report, submitted to Congress in late November 2010, covers the period from April 1 through September 30, 2010.²⁹¹ It states that it reflects the campaign plan of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from September 2009. The 2009 ISAF campaign plan had been under revision since Summer 2010, to reflect emerging conditions on the ground and refined guidance from the new ISAF Commander, General Petraeus, and it was scheduled to be finalized in late 2010.²⁹²

National Security Council “Metrics” Reports

In 2009, reportedly amidst some frustration with communications from the Administration about the progress of the Afghanistan war effort, Congress imposed a new reporting requirement. In the *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009*, Congress required the President on behalf of the Administration as a whole to submit regularly a “policy report on Afghanistan and Pakistan.”²⁹³ This new requirement did not change the requirement for DoD to submit its own 1230 reports.

The new legislation required the President, as a first step, to submit “a clear statement of the objectives of United States policy with respect to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the metrics to be utilized to assess progress toward achieving such objectives.” The Administration met this requirement with an initial report submitted on September 24, 2009.

That initial report spelled out eight objectives, one of which was classified, of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, together with an assigned lead agency:

1. Disrupt terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks (Office of the Director of National Intelligence)
2. Classified
3. Assist efforts to enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan (Department of State)
4. Develop Pakistan’s counterinsurgency (COIN) capabilities; continue to support Pakistan’s efforts to defeat terrorist and insurgent groups (Department of Defense)
5. Involve the international community more actively to forge an international consensus to stabilize Pakistan (Department of State)
6. In Afghanistan, reverse the Taliban’s momentum and build Afghan National Security Force capacity so that we can begin to transition responsibility for security to the Afghan government and decrease our troop presence by July 2011 (Department of Defense)

²⁹¹ Department of Defense, “Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan”, November 2010.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.11, and communications from ISAF officials, 2010.

²⁹³ *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009*, §1117, P.L. 111-32, June 24, 2009.

7. Selectively build the capacity of the Afghan government which enables Afghans to assume responsibility in the four-step process of clear-hold-build-transfer (Department of State)
8. Involve the international community more actively to forge an international consensus to stabilize Afghanistan (Department of State).²⁹⁴

The legislation required simply that subsequent reports describe and assess progress toward each objective named in the initial report, together with any modifications to those objectives required by changing circumstances. In March 2010, the Administration submitted the first so-called metrics report, based on the September 2009 statement of objectives. It submitted the second and most recent metrics report in October 2010.²⁹⁵ The Administration followed each report submission with a classified briefing to selected Hill Staffers.

The October 2010 report was not entirely current—it covered events through June 30, 2010. Some recipients on the Hill have pointed to perceived short-comings in the metrics reports submitted to date. Some have argued that most of the “objectives” are more accurately descriptions of process, of avenues to pursue, rather than desired “ends” in the classical sense of strategy. Some have noted that while the reports describe developments in each “objective” area, they do not state how much progress in each area will be sufficient in order for the effort to be successful. Further, the reports do not link the objectives together in a clear strategy including both priorities and appropriate sequencing of the various efforts over time.

Afghanistan and Pakistan Annual Review

In fall 2010, without a Congressional requirement to do so, the Administration undertook its own review of progress to date in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The process, originally nicknamed “the December review”, was re-christened the Afghanistan and Pakistan Annual Review (“APAR”), suggesting that future annual reviews are envisaged.²⁹⁶

The Administration did not provide the Congress with the results of the review. Instead, it produced and provided to the Hill a five-page, unclassified summary entitled, “Overview of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Annual Review.”²⁹⁷ The overview paper confirmed the “core goal” initially articulated by President Obama in March 2009, argued that “specific components of our strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan are working well,” and stated that “the challenge remains to make our gains durable and sustainable.”

²⁹⁴ Available in President Barack Obama, “Report on Afghanistan and Pakistan, September 2010”, September 30, 2010.

²⁹⁵ President Barack Obama, “Report on Afghanistan and Pakistan, September 2010”, September 30, 2010. This document is unclassified; the Administration provided a separate document that discusses classified matters.

²⁹⁶ Communications from Administration officials, November and December 2010.

²⁹⁷ National Security Staff, “Overview of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Annual Review”, December 15, 2010. Communications from Administration officials, December 2010 and January 2011, confirm that the results of the APAR itself were more extensive. See also Statement by the President on the Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review, December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>; and Department of Defense News Briefing with Under Secretary Fournoy and General Cartwright from the Pentagon, December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4742>.

The APAR summary stated, and Administration officials have confirmed, that the APAR was intended to be “diagnostic” rather than “prescriptive”—that is, while it might identify shortcomings it was not intended to propose remedies.²⁹⁸

In a brief section on methodology, the summary stated that the APAR was intended as an “assessment of our strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” In practice, Administration officials suggested, the APAR process focused primarily on reviewing progress to date, based on input from multiple agencies and from the field, rather than on re-examining the assumptions of U.S. strategy. The summary’s methodology section also noted that a series of high-level discussions were used to “assess the trajectory and pace of progress.”²⁹⁹ Since the actual APAR results were not released, it is difficult to gauge what conclusions Administration officials may have reached about the pace and trajectory of progress in each component of the overall campaign, about possible short-comings in current approaches that might require remedy, or about the overall prospects for success.

Issues for Congress

“Success” in Afghanistan

The Obama Administration has suggested that progress is being made in the campaign. Both the *Summary* of the results of the Administration’s 2010 Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review³⁰⁰ and the National Security Council’s September 2010 “metrics report”³⁰¹ stressed that momentum is shifting in a positive direction in the counter-insurgency effort on the ground.

Some practitioners on the Hill and other observers have noted, however, that the Administration has never yet articulated “how much progress is enough.” While the Administration has named its “objectives” for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, those objectives—as outlined in the “metrics reports”—are more properly considered descriptions of lines of activity than endstates *per se*.

A refined Administration statement about the desired “endstate” in Afghanistan might include:

- The set of minimum conditions in Afghanistan that would allow Afghanistan to sustain stability with relatively limited support from the international community.
- The rough timeframe in which those conditions are likely to be achieved.

To support genuine sustainability, some suggest, those minimum conditions would need to address relevant aspects of Afghanistan’s political architecture, and its foundation for economic development, as well as immediate security conditions. Without such a stated vision of “success,”

²⁹⁸ National Security Staff, “Overview of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Annual Review”, December 15, 2010; and communications from Administration officials, 2010, 2011.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ National Security Staff, “Overview of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Annual Review”, December 15, 2010.

³⁰¹ President Barack Obama, “Report on Afghanistan and Pakistan, September 2010”, September 30, 2010, submitted in accordance with the *Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009*, §1117, P.L. 111-32, June 24, 2009.

it is difficult to gauge how far any observed progress to date takes Afghanistan toward sustainable stability, or how much further effort, and of what kinds, might be required.

Reconciliation

President Karzai has called for an inclusive solution to the conflict, and the Obama Administration has supported an Afghan-led reconciliation process. Both governments have emphasized that the criteria for those wishing to rejoin peaceful society must include renouncing al Qaeda and violence, and accepting the Afghan Constitution.

Some observers have urged accelerating reconciliation efforts, with a view to achieving at least a minimally acceptable settlement in the relatively near future. Supporters of this approach suggest that it could yield tremendous savings in terms of resources and more importantly lives, while still achieving an acceptable outcome.

Other practitioners and observers argue that while reconciliation should be part of the overall campaign, reconciliation efforts should pay due attention to a number of issues likely to shape the prospects for lasting success:

- The extent to which proposed settlement arrangements take account of the concerns of northern, non-Pashtun Afghans who may be wary of renewed Taliban influence in Afghan state and society. Some northern non-Pashtun Afghans, if faced with the prospect of a “bad deal”, might be tempted to mobilize around their own patronage networks, drawing in part on relationships from Northern Alliance days, and in part on networks built through the current Afghan National Security Forces, to oppose a Taliban-influenced new order.
- Whether a reconciliation process includes Afghan women in its discussions, and takes appropriate account of women’s concerns in settlement arrangements.
- The extent to which a reconciliation process seeks active input—not just *post facto* “buy-in”—from the Afghan people across the country and from all walks of life. The High Peace Council, established in September 2010, has taken first steps toward engaging the population by making visits to some provinces; but genuine Afghan participation, it is argued, would depend on community-level debate and input.
- The nature of the Afghan state itself, into which “reconciled insurgents” would be reintroduced. Key practitioners suggest that the stronger and more resilient the state—including the capabilities of its key institutions and, especially, the responsiveness and accountability of its officials to the Afghan people—the more easily it will be able to absorb some potentially dissonant factors.
- The structure of the Afghan state, and in particular the balance between centralization and decentralization. While the Bonn Agreement established a highly centralized state structure, the 2010 *Sub-National Governance Policy*³⁰² sought to devolve some authorities to the sub-national level, and some experts argue that the Afghan state might function more effectively with a de-centralized

³⁰² *Sub-National Governance Policy*, Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), Spring 2010, p.19, available at <http://www.idlg.gov.af/IDLG/images/Policy/SNGP-English-Afghanistan.pdf>.

structure more closely reflecting its history. To the extent that a reconciliation process might consider offering former insurgent leaders sub-national leadership roles, the structure of state authority will be shape the influence they might exercise from such positions.

Governance and Corruption

Both practitioners and observers have argued that power in Afghanistan is exercised through criminal patronage networks that include both powerbrokers and some government officials, who skim state resources and distribute patronage unevenly, alienating many Afghan people. Some suggest that such a system—and such alienation—could prove deeply detrimental to the project of stabilizing Afghanistan.

Efforts to date to counter corruption include significant support from multiple U.S. government agencies, together with other international partners, for specialized Afghan bodies including the Anti-Corruption Unit, the Sensitive Investigative Unit, and the Major Crime Task Force. Efforts have also included the establishment of a series of Task Forces at ISAF—*Shafafiyat* (“transparency”), 2010, and Spot Light—aimed at more actively supporting Afghan anti-corruption efforts and also at improving international community practices to lessen inadvertent contributions to corruption. The Afghan and U.S. governments have underscored repeatedly the importance of fostering good governance and limiting corruption to the overall campaign.

Yet critical policy debates remain unresolved. Open issues that may be of interest to Congress include:

- The extent to which responsive, accountable Afghan governance is essential for achieving the objectives of the overall campaign.
- Whether some forms of corruption are more harmful than others to the campaign, and the extent to which, in such a deeply networked society, specific incidents of corruption can be corrected without addressing the broader networks in which they are situated.
- The appropriate role of the international community—its nature and extent—in supporting Afghan anti-corruption efforts.

Transition

At the November 2010 NATO Lisbon Summit, Allies and the Afghan government agreed to complete a process of transitioning lead responsibility for security to Afghans, district-by-district and province-by-province, by the end of 2014. That decision has raised questions for Afghan, U.S., and other international practitioners. Congress may choose to explore the following unresolved issues:

- The nature of the role of the international community in locations that have transitioned, including both the footprint and activities of international forces, and the supporting role to be played by international civilian organizations. Some observers suggest that the international community’s supporting role could be quite significant, particularly just after a transition decision, in order to ensure that the transition process is irreversible.

- The meaning of transition in those locations in which ISAF has a very limited presence, and thus little to literally “transition.” NATO ISAF has a significant force presence in 17 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, but in Panjshir province, for example, where Ahmed Shah Mahsood staged successful resistance to Soviet forces in the 1980s, the local population has long effectively provided security for itself.
- The mechanisms in place to ensure deliberate, thoughtful transition decisions, in the face of significant political pressure to “show progress” from the capitals of countries contributing troops and providing other significant assistance.
- The plans for balancing resources of all kinds—including leadership time and attention as well as personnel and programs—between transitioning provinces, and those areas that are the operational “main effort” in the ongoing campaign, including Kandahar and Helmand provinces in the south.

Afghan National Security Forces

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are, by many accounts, the “ticket” to a successful transition process, to Afghanistan’s long-term stability, and to the ability to draw down U.S. and other coalition forces responsibly.³⁰³ The current approved target endstrength for the ANSF, by October 2011, is 305,600, including 171,600 Afghan National Army (ANA), and 134,000 Afghan National Police (ANP). Discussions are underway concerning a proposal that would raise the total target endstrength up to as much as 378,000 personnel—including 208,000 ANA and 170,000 ANP—by October 2012. Debates centered on troop numbers obscure more fundamental questions, including Afghanistan’s future requirements for security forces and how those forces will be sustained. Congress may wish to explore these open issues:

- Afghanistan’s future requirement for security forces, starting with an assessment of likely future security challenges. Experts suggest that requirement analyses should consider the appropriate roles and missions of the various forces and how those might be expected to evolve over time.
- Options for sustaining the ANSF in the future, including support by the Afghan government, support by the international community, and partial demobilization. Some observers suggest that this would require a broader look at Afghanistan’s economic prospects including potential sources of revenue, and the government’s future ability to capture that revenue and execute its budgets.

Afghan Local Police

ISAF and Administration officials have indicated that the Afghan Local Police (ALP) program is an important part of the overall campaign, because it “thickens the lines” and creates further resistance to insurgent encroachments, in areas in which formal ANSF and coalition partners have limited reach. The program, personally approved by President Karzai, creates organized local groups that provide some security for their local communities, under formal command by the Ministry of Interior, and with oversight provided by local government officials, local security

³⁰³ Communications from Administration officials, 2010 and 2011.

force leaders, and local communities.³⁰⁴ Officials have indicated an intention to develop the program significantly beyond its February 2011 total of about 3,000 participants. The program draws on the long-standing Afghan tradition of community organization for self-defense, but for many observers, it also recalls recent failed experiments in community-based defense such as the ill-fated Afghan National Auxiliary Police, which was poorly supervised, terrorized local residents, and had to be disbanded. Unresolved issues concerning the ALP include:

- The degree of confidence of the Afghan government and ISAF that ALP teams will not become the armed proxies of local powerbrokers.
- The ability of coalition forces to provide sufficient oversight of the program should it grow substantially. To date local security forces initiatives have relied heavily on close partnering with highly qualified U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), which are in high demand and short supply.
- Future plans for the ALP. One option would be to absorb ALP participants into the formal ANSF, if ANSF target endstrengths allow for such absorption. Another option would be to channel ALP participants into alternative training and employment opportunities, but that approach could create a competition for resources with both reintegration efforts, and economic development initiatives for the population at large, since jobs are in short supply. A third option would be to maintain the ALP indefinitely with its current roles and missions; that approach would require continued oversight by local *shuras*, and continued funding to support the program. A fourth option would be to simply disband the formations, but that could provoke serious disaffection among former participants who might be tempted to seek out less constructive employment opportunities.

U.S. Troop Drawdowns

President Obama has committed the United States to begin a “responsible drawdown” of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. He has also explicitly supported the shared NATO and Afghan goal of transitioning the lead responsibility for security to Afghans by the end of 2014. These important policy decisions leave open a number of basic questions that Congress may wish to explore further:

- The criteria and logic for determining the extent of the first tranche of the U.S. troop drawdown. Some observers suggest that achieving significant progress by July 2011 might allow ISAF to “thin the lines”, using fewer forces to cover the same territory, and that this could allow a significant redeployment of U.S. troops. Others suggest that the opposite logic should apply—if conditions have not improved significantly by July 2011, this should be understood as indicating that the current strategy is not working, and therefore drawing down significantly might make sense, in order to “cut our losses.”
- The proposed “decision point” for considering the second tranche of U.S. troop drawdowns.

³⁰⁴ Communications from ISAF and Administration officials, 2009 and 2010.

- The relationship of future drawdown decisions to the process of transition, including the nature and scope of ISAF's role in locations that have begun the transition process. In particular, experts differ on the role and importance of unit partnering—with its substantial force requirements—once Afghans have assumed the lead.

Long-Term Strategic Partnership

U.S. and Afghan officials have repeatedly stated their commitment to a long-term U.S. Afghan strategic partnership. Negotiations to define the contours of that partnership are scheduled to take place in 2011. Given the potential implications for U.S. national security, regional security, and U.S. resource commitments, Congress may wish to explore:

- The extent to which the strategic partnership may involve U.S. security commitments to Afghanistan to take specific actions in specific circumstances.
- Whether a revised strategic partnership should revisit the legal basis for the presence of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, including both opportunities a re-negotiation might open up, such as future U.S. basing rights; and potential constraints a re-negotiation could lead to, such as stricter limitations on counter-terrorism activities.
- The implications of a new bilateral strategic partnership for U.S. commitments of resources, troops, and assistance after 2014.

Economic Strategy

The *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011* required, in Section 1535, that the President produce and provide an economic strategy for Afghanistan. According to the *NDAA*, that strategy should support the broader counterinsurgency campaign; promote economic stabilization and development; and help create sustainable Afghan institutions. Some practitioners worry that crafting a full-scale economic strategy will encourage “mission creep”, while others suggest, instead, that the exercise could help delimit the U.S. role by underscoring areas appropriate for the specialized expertise of the private sector, international financial institutions, and other partners. Congress may wish to explore these issues:

- The importance of a viable economic strategy for Afghanistan to the success of the campaign.
- The appropriate balance between helping the Afghan government meet the near-term needs of the Afghan people, and helping that government develop the sustainable ability to meet the people's future needs.
- The ways in which development assistance of all kinds has contributed toward the empowerment of criminal patronage networks, and appropriate approaches for ameliorating those effects.
- The prospects for the commitment of U.S. government civilian agencies to increase, in order to leverage new opportunities to support government and development, even as the U.S. force presence diminishes.

Safe Havens in Pakistan

The Obama Administration has frequently noted the importance to the success of the campaign in Afghanistan of Pakistani military action against insurgent safe havens inside Pakistan. In his December 2010 speech, President Obama stated that “we will continue to insist to Pakistani leaders that terrorist safe havens within their borders must be dealt with.”³⁰⁵ In a recent interview, asked whether the effort in Afghanistan can succeed “without Pakistan taking tougher action against Afghan militants on its soil”, ISAF Commander General Petraeus replied, “We think you can certainly continue to make progress.”³⁰⁶ In another recent interview, ISAF Joint Command Commander, asked the same question, Lieutenant General Rodriguez agreed that progress could be made in the absence of concerted Pakistani action but stressed that it is important to continue to encourage Pakistan to undertake operations, and also to build durability into the Afghan system.³⁰⁷ It is unclear whether Pakistan will undertake military operations targeting Afghan Taliban strongholds on their soil, or whether, should they do so, those operations would be successful. Congress may wish to probe the following matters:

- The extent to which Pakistani reluctance to undertake military operations against the Afghan Taliban, particularly in the North Waziristan agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), stems from a lack of will, a lack of the requisite capabilities, or some combination thereof. Different root causes might reasonably suggest different U.S. approaches.
- The extent to which durable stability can be achieved in Afghanistan while the Afghan Taliban continue to enjoy safe haven just across the border in Pakistan. Some suggest that progress made in developing the capacity and capability of Afghan security forces and governing structures may be able to compensate, to some extent, for slower progress against safe havens, by giving the Afghan state greater resistance to insurgent incursions.

Implications for NATO

Most NATO observers suggest that “Afghanistan” is a critical test for the Alliance, including its ability to conduct major out-of-area missions, and its relevance to 21st century security challenges, and many have argued that failure in Afghanistan could spell the end of the Alliance. For a number of practitioners, that line of thinking implies an imperative to make sure that the Alliance is successful in Afghanistan—which is not quite the same thing, logically, as making sure that Afghanistan itself succeeds. Congress may wish to consider:

- The extent to which a “successful NATO” is important in general for supporting U.S. national security interests.
- What it would take for the outcome in Afghanistan to be considered a “NATO success,” and what if any differences that might entail from a strict pursuit of security, good governance and development for Afghanistan.

³⁰⁵ Statement by the President on the Afghanistan Pakistan Annual Review, December 16, 2010, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/16/statement-president-afghanistan-pakistan-annual-review>.

³⁰⁶ Matthew Green, *Financial Times*, Interview with General David Petraeus, February 7, 2011.

³⁰⁷ See DoD News Briefing with LTG Rodriguez, February 1, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4764>.

Implications for U.S. Force Sizing

Defense practitioners and analysts are likely to continue to seek lessons from U.S. military prosecution of the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq to apply to future U.S. force shaping and sizing. Such conclusions, and the way they are applied, are likely to have a profound impact on how the Military Services fulfill their responsibilities, in accordance with Title 10, U.S. Code, to organize, man, train and equip military forces. Congress may wish to consider:

- The nature and scale of the capabilities required to successfully prosecute complex contingency operations like those in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- The relative importance of such capabilities compared with more conventional capabilities, and with capabilities designed to meet emerging threats such as cyber.
- The impact of the role played by contractors on force size requirements for such complex contingencies.

Implications for Caring for Returning Veterans

Media reports from the field, including the powerful documentary *Restrepo* about the experiences of one infantry platoon in the Korengal Valley of Kunar province, underscore the intensity of many U.S. servicemembers' combat experiences. Those experiences stand out as all the more singular, against the backdrop of what many experts see as a growing civil-military divide in the United States. Many observers have wondered, "Who will these kids talk to, when they come home?" Congress may wish to consider:

- How well prepared the Military Services are to provide adequate support to servicemembers returning from Afghanistan and their families.

Implications for U.S. Civ-Mil Integration

Some experts have suggested that Afghanistan could prove a useful test case for the balanced, integrated application of all elements of U.S. national power. U.S. experiences in Afghanistan to date have yielded some innovations in inter-agency collaboration, including the "Senior Civilian Representative" model for civil-military relations, and the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC) model for multi-agency task forces. At the same time, the Afghanistan effort continues to highlight the persistence of distinct agency cultures that are not always inclined to give each other the benefit of the doubt. Congress may wish to consider these issues:

- The extent to which the U.S. footprint in Afghanistan, following both the civilian and military personnel surges, reflects an appropriate civil-military distribution of labor.
- The factors which make some multi-agency undertakings, such as the ATFC, very effective. Some observers have suggested that in the case of the ATFC, key factors may have included either the specificity, or the criticality to the overall campaign, of the group's mission.
- Whether the persistent "clash of cultures" among agencies might be ameliorated to some extent by programs that support shared training, shared educational experiences, and service in other agencies.

- The most appropriate balance of roles and missions among U.S. government agencies, including the contractor workforce, in future complex contingencies, and the extent to which more explicit guidance about that balance may be required.

Additional Reports

CRS Report RL33110, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*, by Amy Belasco.

CRS Report RL32686, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

CRS Report R41084, *Afghanistan Casualties: Military Forces and Civilians*, by Susan G. Chesser.

CRS Report R40991, *Private Security Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Legal Issues*, by Jennifer K. Elsea.

CRS Report RL33834, *Defense Logistical Support Contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan: Issues for Congress*, by Valerie Bailey Grasso.

CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

CRS Report RS21922, *Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance*, by Kenneth Katzman.

CRS Report R41307, *Pakistan: Key Current Issues and Developments*, by K. Alan Kronstadt.

CRS Report R40747, *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan: Background and Policy Issues*, by Rhoda Margesson.

CRS Report R40835, *The Department of Defense's Use of Private Security Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background, Analysis, and Options for Congress*, by Moshe Schwartz.

CRS Report R40764, *Department of Defense Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan: Background and Analysis*, by Moshe Schwartz.

CRS Report R40699, *Afghanistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance*, by Curt Tarnoff.

CRS Report R41484, *Afghanistan: U.S. Rule of Law and Justice Sector Assistance*, by Liana Sun Wyler and Kenneth Katzman.

